

THE INFLUENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL
IDEALISM OF THE PROPHETS ON THE
CULTUS OF OLD ISRAEL

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PREFACE

No student of Old Testament religion can afford to ignore the apparent conflict between the utterances of the prophets and the specific requirements of the Law in respect to the cultus of Israel. The problem thus created has been very generally recognized by Old Testament scholars, and various solutions of the problem involved have been advanced. My aim is well defined in the title of this thesis, which will be to show how the cult of old Israel was influenced and refined by the religious and ethical idealism of the prophets of the pre-exilic period. This is a phase of the subject which has been more or less neglected. The majority of writers have fastened upon what the prophets said in criticism of the cultus; and they have interpreted their utterances to mean that these men absolutely rejected the cult root and branch, and advocated in its stead a pure spiritual religion divested of all forms and freed from all institutions. In my judgment this is an unwarranted conclusion. It is not a true interpretation; it does not do justice to the practical wisdom of the prophets. For how were their great spiritual and ethical ideals to be promoted and accepted and brought into relation to life except as they were embodied in a rite or in an institution? The prophets criticised the gross abuses of the cultus, but they did not reject the cultus per se. To show this will constitute the negative side of my aim in this discussion.

The positive aim of my thesis will be to show that the prophets, so far from seeking to sweep away the whole ritual of worship, "that nurse of their vain hopes, that false prophet of peace,"¹ labored earnestly to elevate the worship of Israel, to refine and moralize it, and impart ethical sanctions to it; in a word, to make it truly expressive of the ethical character of Jahweh and of the worshipper's true relation to Him. A too literal

¹G.A.Smith: The Book Of The Twelve Prophets, vol.I, p.170

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interpretation of the prophets in reference to the cultus may easily be made the ground for excluding any ritual of worship from religion, however refined and spiritual it may be. The cultus per se is not inimical to the development of high ethical character. But character that is lacking in reverence is defective. "Religion, being our conscious relation with God, comes to its highest and finest forms in worship, which is the expression of our sense of the worth of God."² There is a mystical element in religion which can only be neglected at the peril of certain spiritual loss. It is true, there is always the danger of a purely ritualistic system degenerating into a round of pure formalism. But the danger is equally great in non-liturgical systems of an informalism in which all sense of what is good taste in the worship of God is lost. The religious ideal is to be sought in holding a proper balance between the ethical and the ceremonial; to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." It was for this ideal that the prophets labored. And when the cultic practices of Israel were codified it became evident that they had not labored in vain. It is in an endeavor to show this that the writing of this thesis has been undertaken.

²J.H.Snowden: The Psychology Of Religion, p.236.

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I

I. Introduction

CHAPTER I.

1. Problems involved. The main questions which confront the the Old Testa-
ment student in this connection are: (1) What value, if any, did the prophets
attach to sacrifice? Did they mean to deny the divine origin or sanction of
sacrifice in Israel? (2) In view of the statements of the prophets, how are
the early traditions of Israel to be interpreted? Are they to be regarded as
unhistorical and, therefore, unreliable? Or were the prophets mistaken in as-
suming that sacrifice had little or no place in the early religion of Israel?
(3) What place does the principle of a progressive revelation and of gradual
development have in the religion of Israel? This is a question which has a
very direct and important bearing on the whole problem. Are we to seek and
expect to find at the very beginning of Hebrew religion those high ideals
which the great prophets proclaimed centuries later? These are questions which
will arise constantly in the course of this discussion.

2. The scope of the thesis. It is in the writings of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and
Jeremiah, that the severest criticisms of the cultus are to be found. It
will be necessary, therefore, to examine their statements with a view to de-
termining their attitude to the cultus. The post-exilic prophets manifested
an altogether different attitude from that of their predecessors. They were
not antagonistic to the worship. Haggai and Zechariah took an active part in
the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of the worship. Malachi, who
began his ministry following the rebuilding of the temple, was friendly to
the cultus. He strove to purify it of whatever imperfections it possessed. His
chief criticism was directed at the neglect of the worship of Jahweh, the re-
sponsibility for which he placed largely upon the priests. He condemned the

practice of presenting to Jahweh offerings so imperfect that they would not be acceptable to the Persian governor. These prophets while placing more emphasis upon the ceremonial in religion than the pre-exilic prophets, were no less trenchant in their denunciation of the moral evils of their time than their predecessors. The post-exilic prophets were confronted with an entirely different situation from that of the pre-exilic prophets. Their attitude must be appraised in the light of the radical changes which the Exile wrought, and of the immediate problems which confronted them. Amos and Hosea denounced the religious fanaticism of their times, but the post-exilic prophets had to strive to arouse the people from religious indifference and scepticism.

The terminus ad quem of this discussion will be the religion of the post-exilic period. But the terminus a quo will be primitive Semitic religion. In order to show just what the cultus was as the prophets knew it, and to properly evaluate their criticisms of it, I shall endeavor to trace its development from the earliest times. This will involve a review of its Semitic antecedents. For, "the Semites are the religious leaders of humanity. The three great monotheisms have arisen among them; the grandest prophets of the world have been their sons. For this high destiny the race was prepared by their age-long seclusion in Arabia." ¹ The primitive Hebrew cultus was not the product peculiarly of Hebrew religion. It was carried over from primitive Semitic religion and adapted to new needs. "Indeed when we regard the role assigned by Providence to the Semitic race in the ancient world, it seems to us to be a part of this very significance attaching to the mission of the Hebrews that it belonged to that race and shared its mental and moral characteristics."² It is only by keeping this fact constantly in mind that the lapse of the Hebrews into Canaanitish heathenism after the settlement, and even before that, can be understood.

Such a survey will throw much light on our problem. In the first place,

¹Smith, G.A.: Historical Geography Of The Holy Land, 18th. Ed., p.285.

²McCurdy: History Prophecy And The Monuments, single vol. p.9.

it will furnish a point of approach to an understanding of the prophetic attitude to the cultus. Israel's system of worship in the 8th. century B.C., was, to say the least, semi-heathen³. It was contrary to the ideals of Mosaism, and it contradicted all that the prophets believed Jahweh to be in His own person and which He required from the people of His choice. No interpretation of the attitude of the prophets to the cultus can be regarded as satisfactory that ignores the close relation between popular Hebrew religion and primitive Semitic religion. . It will be from this point of view that I shall approach an interpretation of the prophetic attitude toward the worship of Israel.

In the second place, this survey will enable us to estimate to what extent the idealism of the prophets influenced the cultus of old Israel. There can be hardly any question that but for the unremitting struggle which the prophetic party waged against the disintegrating influence of Semitic heathenism⁴, the cultus of Israel would have become thoroughly pagan. An examination of the ritual codes and of the Psalter will reveal the fact that the worship of Israel was raised towards "an ever-growing perfection in all that concerns religious belief, the moral sense, and social justice."⁵

3. The method of treatment. The method of treatment will be the historico-religio⁶ method. The historical-religious approach has revealed the close relation between Old Testament history and revelation. And in no part of the Old Testament is this close relation between the historic occasion and divine revelation more evident than in the teachings of the prophets. The development of the cultus can be traced in the codes, each of which is marked off from the other by the marks of progress from the simple to the more elaborate.

This method has been adopted because I believe it will lead to a satisfactory understanding, both of the cultus of Israel in the 8th. century and of the attitude of the prophets to it. And elaborate system of religious beliefs and practices such as existed in Amos' day presupposes a long period of development, beginning with the simple or nomadic stage.⁴

³Loisy: The Religion Of Israel, p.188f.

⁴Cf. McCurdy: *ibid.*, sec.9. p.8f. Knudson: Religious Teachings Of The

The principle of development has been carried to extremes by some critics, who regard the relation between Jahweh and Israel as a natural one, both in its origin and in its character. It was only lifted, it is contended, from the low level of naturalism to the higher ethical and spiritual levels by the prophets. I shall try to avoid falling into this error. The Old Testament is the record of a progressive revelation of ethical and religious truth that is wrapped up in and inseparable from the history of the Hebrew people. ^{a/} But when full allowance is made for the influence of Israel's Semitic inheritance, and of the surrounding nations, something more is needed to explain the marvellous religious development of Israel, a development which has no parallel in the history of religions. The religion of Israel cannot be reduced to the level of naturalism, for there is no natural law adequate to fully explain it. The primitive elements out of which it emerged, the road along which it moved, and the final goal at which it arrived, stamp Old Testament religion with the hall-mark of the divine.

4. History of opinion. The problem created by the statements of the pre-exilic prophets respecting the cultus has attracted the attention of Old Testament scholars generally. But it has been dealt with for the most part only in so far as it has contributed to the buttressing or the breaking down of some other hypothesis of seemingly greater import. Almost every writer on Old Testament prophecy, history, and religion, might be quoted on this subject. But their statements respecting the cultus are more or less incidental. Little, if any, attempt has been made to show that the prophets exercised a positive influence on the cultus. Nor has the problem been dealt with as such with a view to arriving at a satisfactory solution of it, altogether apart from any other problem.⁵ I do not mean to affirm that our problem can be solved without any reference to questions of historical or of

⁵Prof. A.C. Welch is a notable exception in this respect. Mention will be made at a later stage of his contributions to a solution of this problem.

literary criticism, for such considerations must enter into it. But I do not believe that a satisfactory solution of the problem can be arrived at if it is made subordinate to theories either of Biblical criticism or of systematic theology. And it is just this which I believe has been done. Since it would be impossible within the limits of this thesis to make anything approaching a full review of the knowledge on the subject, an indication of the main lines of thought will have to suffice.

There are two main lines of thought which include practically all that has been written on the subject: (1) The cultus was without divine sanction, being a thing of purely human device rather than divine origin. (2) Compared with the requirements of the moral law the requirements of the ritual codes are relatively unimportant.

Higher criticism adduces the attitude of the pre-exilic prophets to the cultus in order to establish the non-Mosaic character of the legal codes. The movement which led to this conclusion may be said to have had its inception with Astruc, a French physician, who, in his "Conjectures," first called attention to the composite character of Genesis. Astruc was followed by Eichhorn, whom Cheyne ventures to call, "The founder of Old Testament Criticism"⁶ The composite character of the Pentateuch was still further developed by a succession of able scholars in Germany, notably DeWette, Ewald, Vatke, Dillman, et al.⁷ The modern view of the Pentateuch became dominant with the work of Kuenen of Holland, and of Graf and Wellhausen of Germany. In 1878 Wellhausen's "Prolegomena To The History Of Israel" was published. The thesis of the Prolegomena is that, "The law of Moses is the starting point for the history of Judaism rather than for the history of ancient Israel."⁸

The Wellhausen hypothesis gained many adherents, chief among whom were Stade, Duhm, and Marti, in Germany; and among English speaking scholars, Robertson Smith, Cheyne, and Briggs. Smith, who wrote the preface to the

⁶Founders Of Old Testament Criticism, p.13.

⁷See E.McQueen: Old Testament Criticism; and Cheyne: ibid,

⁸Prolegomena, Eng.Trans., p.1, cf.PP,1-60.

English translation of the Prolegomena, takes essentially the same position as Wellhausen?⁹

The theory of the Wellhausen school did not go unchallenged. In Germany Prof. R. Kittel took issue with it, holding that Wellhausen's theories are contradicted by much which they are unable to explain.¹⁰ Kittel points out that what the prophets of the pre-exilic period do reveal is that, "zeal for Jahweh was based on the naive delusion that quantity is everything, and that outward performances cover inner defects, which indeed had only too often come to the surface already."¹¹ The Wellhausen contention that no ritual code had existed prior to the Exile received a severe criticism at the hands of two British scholars, Dr. James Robertson,¹² and Dr. James Orr,¹³ both of whom have given us an excellent treatment of the subject from the conservative point of view. The general argument of these scholars is very similar to that of Kittel. The prophets, they hold, insisted upon the utter worthlessness of sacrifice without the heart being in it. A literal interpretation of their utterances leads to absurdities.

The same divergence of opinion is found among Old Testament^{scholars} in America. The chief exponents of the Wellhausen theory are C.A. Briggs,¹⁴ C.F. Kent,¹⁵ and H. Creelman.¹⁶ The strongest defenders of the traditional view of the Mosaic authorship of the legal codes are, W.H. Green,¹⁷ R.D. Wilson,¹⁸ and J.H. Raven.¹⁹

Some scholars, like S.R. Driver²⁰ and E. Sellin of Berlin²¹ take a middle position. They accept the results of the critical examination of the Pentateuch, but at the same time are guardedly conservative in their conclusions.

⁹The Old Testament In The Jewish Church. ¹⁰A History Of The Hebrews, vol. I, pp. 112ff. ¹¹Ibid: p. 313. ¹²The Early Religion Of Israel, vol. II, pp. 195-227. ¹³Problem Of The Old Testament, pp. 156ff.

¹⁴Biblical Study. ¹⁵Origin And Permanent Value Of The Old Testament.

¹⁶Introduction To The Old Testament. ¹⁷Higher Criticism of The Pentateuch.

¹⁸Scientific Investigation Of The Old Testament. ¹⁹Old Test. Introduction.

²⁰Introduction To The Literature Of The Old Testament.

²¹Introduction To The Old Testament, English Translation.

In the field of Biblical interpretation the second of the views stated above predominates. Commentators, both before and since the advent of Higher Criticism, have taken the position that the prophets did not reject sacrifice per se; nor did they consider that God regarded sacrifices in themselves, but that divorced from a contrite heart and a loving obedient spirit they were meaningless and had better never have been offered to God. That which validates the sacrifices is not merely the sanction of a law, but the presence of the inner spirit of piety, of which they were intended to be the expression. When religious rites were made a substitute for essential morality they became an abomination to God. Such was the interpretation which the older commentators made of the utterances of the prophets respecting the cult.

The interpretations of more recent commentators do not differ greatly from the foregoing. God is not to be propitiated with costly offerings and elaborate rites alone without regard for moral uprightness. In the popular religion there was too much sacrifice and not enough justice. The cultus was condemned because it was based upon a false conception of the primary requirement of God.²²

Dr. George Adam Smith takes a position similar to that of the Wellhausen school. Israel had a ritual of some kind from the beginning. It was, however, but a modification of the ritual common to all Semites. Sacrifice had never been the divinely revealed element in the Jahweh religion.²³

Interpreters in the fields of Old Testament history, prophecy, and theology, agree in the main with the majority of commentators. What the prophets "condemned in no uncertain language," was "the substitution of assiduous and correct ritual for upright conduct in social life."²⁴ Even Henry Preserved Smith, known for his extreme critical views, while taking the statements of the prophets to mean that no sacrifices were offered to Jahweh

²²Cf. Harper: Amos, International Critical Commentary, p.136f. Skinner

Isaiah, vol.I, pp. 1ff. Gray: Isaiah, vol.I, p16f. Sacrifice In The O.T.

²³The Book Of The Twelve Prophets, vol.I, pp.102-106,283,313,324,343,421f.

²⁴Wade: Old Testament History, p.425f.

during the wilderness period, yet declares that the real reason for God's estrangement from Israel is to be found in their moral corruption rather than in their elaborate ritual.²⁵

Prof. A.C. Welch who has devoted much attention to this problem, both in his published works and in his classroom lectures, has pointed out that it is a conflict of ideas. The prophet's exalted idea of God comes into conflict with the popular idea of God, "as being contented with the meticulous and pettifogging services which are offered at these shrines."²⁶ The attitude of the prophets to the cultus, according to Dr. Welch, cannot be understood apart from their conception of God.²⁷ Reference may be made to two other works of Dr. Welch. In his "The Psalter In Life Worship And History" the close relationship between the Psalter and cult practices, and the close association of prophet and priest are brought out.²⁸ And in "The Code Of Deuteronomy" Dr. Welch shows how prophets and priests worked together for the purification of the ritual of Jahweh.²⁹ Mention may also be made of a more recent work in which Prof. Welch discusses the attitude of Jeremiah to the cultus.³⁰

A brief reference to the position taken by writers on Old Testament theology and prophecy must needs suffice. Dr. A.B. Davidson, author of "Old Testament Theology," and of "Old Testament Prophecy," takes the position that the prophets did not protest against the ritual per se; they denounced it as it was practiced. The prophet's view of the cult was determined by his "stringent doctrine of the moral being of God."³¹

The position of A.F. Kirkpatrick is similar to that of Davidson, namely, Israel's false conception of God and their moral offences invalidated their worship of Jahweh.³²

²⁵Old Testament History, pp. 211-214, 288. ²⁶Religion of Israel Under The Kingdom, pp. 85-90. ²⁷Ibid, pp. 124ff, 180ff. ²⁸See chapter III.

²⁹See pp. 97-220. ³⁰Jeremiah His Time And Work, chapter VII.

³¹See Biblical And Literary Essays, pp. 120ff, 126f, 131f. See also Old Testament Theology, pp. 315ff. ³²The Doctrines Of The prophets, pp. 96f, 132f, 223f, 311f.

Those who deny the divine authority of the cultus of early Israel distinguish between a "priestly Torah" and a "prophetic Torah" Such a distinction is declared by Willis J. Beecher to be groundless. There was but one Torah common to both priests and prophets, but to which each stood in differing relations. Both the prophet and the priest interpreted and expounded the Torah, but it was through the prophet that the Torah was revealed.³³

Turning now to the field of Old Testament religion, we find that Dr. A. C. Knudson, who grants the possibility of the Decalogue having come from Moses, affirms that the prophetic condemnation of the traditional worship was but a manifestation of "the prophetic stress on the righteousness of God."³⁴ A similar view is taken in a more recent work by Drs. Oesterly and Robinson.³⁵ The view is expressed that while "the syncretistic cultus of the Baal Jahweh" was an inheritance of the pastoral religion, yet the real objection of the prophets was, "that it served as a moral opiate, and dulled the consciences of men to the reality of true spiritual values."

Christian theologians who regard the sacrificial system of the Old Testament as a type of Christ's atoning sacrifice have found it to be necessary to offer some apology for the utterances of the prophets respecting sacrifice. It may be pointed out, without entering into any detailed review, that Christian apologists generally take the view that: (1) Old Testament sacrifices were the appointed means by which fellowship with God, when forfeited by sin, could be again restored; (2) they looked forward^{to} and prefigured the atoning work of Christ, by which the whole race was reconciled to God; (3) the attack of the prophets on the institution, therefore, was directed against the abuses with which it had become corrupted, and not against the institution itself; and (4) sacrifice, when properly offered, expressed the offerer's consciousness of sin and contriteness of heart; and while the offerings of sinful, impenitent people are rejected, nothing that any of the prophets says would imply that where the truly penitent heart is present the sacrific-

³³The Prophets And The Promise, pp. 133-172 ³⁴Religious Teachings Of The Old Testament, p. 160 ³⁵Hebrew Religion, p. 201f.

ice offered to God would be unacceptable. W.P.Paterson in an extensive article on "Sacrifice" deals at length with this problem.³⁶ The prophets, he argues, criticised the cult in the light of their clearer knowledge of God. That which constitutes the ground of acceptance with God is the disposition or spirit of the worshipper. It is hardly conceivable that the prophets, with their lofty conception of God and His will, should regard sacrifice as a gift made to influence Him who demanded the whole life. Its efficacy was neither more nor less than that of prayer; it was "a vehicle for the expression of the sentiments, and for the revelation of the spirit of the life of those who sincerely served or sought God."³⁷ This view represents Christian apologists generally.³⁸

³⁶Hastings Dictionary Of The Bible, vol.IV, pp.329-348.

³⁷Ibid, p.336a.

³⁸See A.H.Strong: Systematic Theology, vol.II, pp.722-726.

J.Scott Lidgett: The Spiritual Principle Of The Atonement, chap.III.

David Smith: The Atonement In The Light Of History And The Modern Spirit, pp.32-46.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL
IDEALISM OF THE PROPHETS ON THE
CULTUS OF OLD ISRAEL

11

PART II

THE CULTUS OF OLD ISRAEL AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER II
THE ANTIQUITY OF THE CULTUS

Religion and worship are inseparable. Religion is a personal relation, it ^{a!} is man's conscious relation with his God; it is a relationship in which he is conscious of his dependence upon and his need of God. It is out of this consciousness that the cultus takes its _^rise, for it is in worship that the at- ^s titude of the individual or of the community towards the deity is expressed. It is through the act of worship that the worshipper gives expression to his sense of the worth of God. The forms of worship, therefore, cannot rise higher or become more refined or pure than the worshipper's conception of his God. As the conception of the deity becomes more elevated and refined the forms of worship must reflect the advance. When the cultus does not do this it tends to obscure the true character of the deity. It is important to remember this, for it is my conviction that the solution of the problem of the prophetic attitude to the cultus is to be found right here. The question is not whether Israel had a cultus in the early stages of its history; it is whether the forms of worship kept pace with the growing and enriching conception of Jahweh, reflecting more and more His essentially spiritual and ethical character.

Now, since "worship is a universal fact and a practical necessity" arising out of man's conscious relation with his God, sacrifices, sanctuaries, and sacred symbolism have had their place in religion from the most ancient times. And so thoroughly had they become a part of the worship that they persisted long after the original reason for their institution had been forgotten.

The Biblical writers regard the cultus as a thing of great antiquity.

The prophetic historians regarded "sacrifice as something which existed before Israel existed."¹ Sacrifice was a common practice among men in pre-historic times, even before a special divine revelation had been given to Israel. Cain and Abel were the first among men to offer sacrifice to God. Each was representative of the two great classes of primitive times, Cain of the agriculturists, and Abel of the pastoral peoples. Hence, the institution of sacrifice, which, "among the elements of the cultus, by the consent of antiquity----- excelled and overshadowed all other ordinances of worship in that it takes the form of the rendering to God of a material oblation,"² is recognized as coeval with the human race. In the Genesis story(ch.4), two chief classes of sacrifice are attributed to Cain and Abel, namely, the bloodless or cereal offering, and the bloody or animal sacrifice. But the only significance attaching to this is that each brought to God the first-fruits of that with which he worked. It is idle to affirm that Cain's offering was rejected because it was a bloodless oblation. There is nothing to indicate what the motive was back of the offering.³ The same term *minḥah* (מִנְחָה) is used of both offerings, and this is the term used in the early literature for both the cereal and the animal sacrifices. The offering of the *minḥah* by Cain and Abel was an act of worship expressing adoration of and gratitude to God.

In the patriarchal narratives the altar is prominent. Noah's first act upon leaving the ark was to build an altar, upon which he offered burnt-offerings of clean beasts and birds to God(Gen.8:20;). There is no mention of Abraham offering sacrifice prior to his entrance into Canaan, yet immediately upon his arrival at Shechem he erects there an altar unto Jahweh. Dr. Welch expresses the view that "it was not the sacrifice, but the calling on the name of Jahweh which seemed to him(the J writer)to constitute the specifically Israelite element in this worship."⁴ And this because the

¹Welch: Religion Of Israel Under The Kingdom, p.16 ²Paterson: Hastings Dictionary Bible, vol.IV, p.320b. ³See Driver: Book of Genesis, p.64. ⁴Religion Of Israel Under The Kingdom, p.16f.

writer in his story of Abraham building altars adds, that there Abraham called upon the name of Jahweh. But it seems to me that what is implied in the phrase "And there he called upon the name of Jahweh," means nothing more than that the sacrifice which he offered upon the altar was offered to Jahweh as an act of worship, of homage, and of prayer. Some form of words doubtless accompanied the offering by which it was specifically set apart to Jahweh, and this may have been what the writer had in mind. The same phrase occurs in Gen. 4:26; "Then began men to call upon the name of Jahweh." Dr. Driver explains its use here in connection with the ancient cults: "Properly(as always) to call with, i.e., to use the name in invocations, in the manner of ancient cults, especially at times of sacrifice."⁵ It is in connection with the cult of the patriarchs that the expression generally occurs(cf.Gen.25:25;). I feel, therefore, that no conclusions can be drawn from this expression as to the writer's idea of sacrifice. Sometimes J records the fact of Abraham building an altar'unto Jahweh' without adding that he called upon the name of Jahweh(cf.Gen.13:18;). But the idea conveyed is the same.

What I am concerned with here, however, is to point out that not only does the cultus of the altar antedate the Hebrew nation, but it was regarded as having had a prominent place in the religious life of the Hebrews from the very beginning of their history; for was not the very first act of their father Abraham upon entering Canaan to erect an altar and there call upon the name of Jahweh? And from that moment on down through their history the altar was central in the religion of Israel.

Isaac and Jacob both followed the practice of their father Abraham and built altars and worshipped Jahweh with their sacrifices. Isaac seems to have confined his worship to Beersheba, but Jacob offered sacrifices at various places(cf.Gen.28:18; 31:54; 33:20; 35:7; 46:1; cf.also 26:25;). The first recorded sacrifice which Jacob offered was at Bethel, where he made an offering

⁵The Book Of Genesis, p.71.

of oil following his vision of Jahweh(Gen.28.)

The narrative of Joseph and of his people's experiences in Egypt has nothing to say about altars or sacrifices. Dr. Welch suggests as a partial explanation of this silence the view that "Egypt was not regarded as a fitting place for sacrifice to Jahweh."⁶ But that this silence is conclusive proof of the cessation of sacrifice during that period is very doubtful. One can hardly escape the conviction that the reunion between Jacob and his long-lost son would be an occasion for the offering of sacrifice. And Semites and shepherds that they were, they would be familiar with the spring sacrifices and festivals common among the Semitic peoples for centuries. The original feast of the Passover was some such festival.

We find, then, in the narratives of the pre-Mosaic period that the altar is the most conspicuous element in the early religion of the Hebrews. It stood for the sanctuary of Jahweh, and it marked the place where ~~He~~ had revealed Himself to His servants.

There was no fixed rule as to either the location or the construction of the altar. An altar apparently was erected wherever the patriarchs pitched their tents, or wherever opportunity was given for sacrifice. So far as the place of sacrifice was concerned there was complete freedom. The altar itself was of very simple construction, consisting of a pile of loose stones or of earth. Not only was there no fixed place, but there was no stated time or season for the offering of sacrifice, it was evidently spontaneous and might be offered at any time. The rationale of the sacrifice was that it was an acknowledgement of allegiance to Jahweh. In many instances the erection of an altar follows a revelation of the grace of Jahweh to the worshipper(cf.Gen.12:7; 15:22; 28:18; 35:7;). The idea of propitiation nowhere enters in, even though, as Dr. Welch reminds us,⁷ these narratives were written during a period when such an idea was prevalent(cf.I.Sam.3:14;

⁶Religion of Israel Under The Kingdom, p.17.

⁷Ibid, p.19.

26:19; II.Sam.21:1-9; 24:25;). In this period there was no organized priesthood. The worshipper offered his own sacrifice. The sacrifices offered were of various kinds; the covenant sacrifice(Gen.15:7ff;), burnt-offering(Gen.22:13;), the libation(Gen.28:18;), and peace-offering(Gen.31:54;). The materials of sacrifice were cattle, goats, sheep, pigeons, and oil. Prayer is given a prominent place in the worship of this period(cf.Gen.18:23-33; 24:12ff; 32:9-12;). Vows were made and kept(cf.Gen.14:18-24; 28:20-22;). When the practices of this early period were codified it was stated: "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt-offerings, and thy peace-offerings, thy sheep and thine oxen; in all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee"(Ex.20:24;).

The late date of the sources from which we derive our knowledge of the cult practices of the pre-Mosaic period must be considered in any evaluation of the religion of that period. The writers deal with events and practices of a time which antedate them by several centuries. The information which they give is meagre and at the best traditional, not that it is to be set aside on that account. For traditions, orally communicated through many generations at a time when there were no literary forms in which to cast them, may be as reliable as the written record. Modern criticism has shown the need of a careful examination of the written text. But while there are thousands of variant readings in the versions and manuscripts of the Old Testament, it is generally^{granted} that we have the text substantially as it came from the authors. Some critics regard these stories of the patriarchs as told by J and E for the purpose of justifying to themselves the adoption of what were at one time Canaanitish shrines.⁸ The patriarchs have been resolved into astral or tribal gods. At any rate, they are not regarded as individuals. The narrative, we are told, is tribal history personified, and the family relations are but an expression of the political and geographical relations of the

⁸See G.A.Barton: Religion Of Israel, p.35.

several tribes.⁹

Plausible as this theory may be made to appear, it is nevertheless open to serious criticism. Archaeologists have shown that the names Abram, Jacob, and Joseph were common personal names in Babylonia. And Barton himself is at great pains to show that these were real individuals, who at some remote period migrated to Canaan, settled there and gave their names to the locality in which they settled. Later on the Hebrew tribes, so Barton holds, settled in the places bearing these names, and in course of time they came to regard them as the names of their ancestors. Now, while it is definitely known that Abram, Jacob, and Joseph were personal names, yet nothing is known of any tribes bearing these names. And in contrast to the detailed biographies of the patriarchs is the very scant notice of the progenitors of the twelve tribes. This theory ignores the personal element in the stories, which "is too definite and pronounced to be accounted for entirely in this manner. Tribal movements imply tribal leadership; and the Biblical tradition which ascribes to Abraham such leadership is perfectly reasonable. To what extent we are to call the stories legend will depend on the definition of legend. If legend is to be taken as a baseless fancy, the stories are not legend; but if it be taken that the essence of legend consists of a wonderful personality who has made a deep impression on human life so as to lead to idealization, then they are legends."¹⁰

In my judgment, while in the Old Testament national history is sometimes related in personal terms, the Genesis stories relate the movements and experiences of individuals. But I also feel that it would be affirming too much to say that the narratives are not colored to some extent by the conceptions of a later age. The tendency of a later writer is to read into the primitive conceptions of an earlier period his own more mature conceptions, and to interpret the early traditions in the light of the needs and problems of his own time. The earliest narratives of the pre-Mosaic period are now believed to

⁹See Barton: *ibid*, ch.2, and H.P.Smith: *Old Testament History*, ch.3

¹⁰Peritz: *Old Testament History*: p.51f.

have been written between B.C.850 and B.C.750. The writers were moved by definite religious motives and ends, and it is upon their writings that we are dependent for our knowledge of the cultic practices of that early period.

Now, while these stories were put together by men who lived centuries later than the events which they record, it is not to be supposed that they are the product of the writer's imagination; they are the traditions of ancient Israel. Doubtless there would be, for the reasons just stated, a difference between the original form of the tradition and its present literary form. Nevertheless, they are valuable in that they serve to show what place the cult had in the early religion of Israel. And furthermore, since these stories are colored to some extent by the writer's own conceptions, they also serve to show what the attitude of the prophetic school was to the cult, especially the rite of sacrifice. There is a good deal of reason in the statement of Prof. Robertson, in which he says: "The Hebrew writers had some knowledge of the events and crises of the history, from personal experience, from oral tradition, from conviction engrained in the national consciousness, or from written sources; and they set themselves at the time, or at some time, to give an ordered account of the events. But in any case it is their view of the history that is before us."¹¹

The spontaneity and simplicity of the worship of the ancestors of the Israelites, as described by the Hebrew historians, witness to the antiquity of the cultus of Israel. And this is all the more convincing when it is remembered that they wrote at a time when a very elaborate and highly organized worship was carried on at the sanctuaries of Israel. Their account of the cultic practices of the remote period in the past does not seem to have been colored by the elaborate ritualistic practices of their own day. Hence, I can see no reason for refusing to accept these narratives as a reliable witness to the antiquity of the cultus of Israel.

¹¹The Early Religion Of Israel, vol.I, p.39

CHAPTER III.

ISRAEL'S PAGAN SEMITIC INHERITANCE.

There are a number of theories as to where the Semitic race and its institutions had their origin.¹ It is now generally agreed that the barren Arabian peninsula was from time immemorial the home of the Semites. As their numbers increased they were forced to seek more fertile lands which would support them and their flocks. There were four directions in which they emigrated. (1) The southwest, where the Semitic kingdom of Ethiopia was built up; (2) eastward across the Euphrates river, where great empires were ultimately established; (3) northward up through the Syrian desert, and overflowing into western Syria; (4) northwestward across the Suez into the valley of the Nile. The resultant of these movements was a large group of Semitic nations, of whom the most numerous and the most powerful were the northern Semites. This group included, (1) the Babylonians, -old Babylonian, Assyrian, and Chaldeans; (2) Aramean, - Mesopotamian and Syrian; (3) Canaanitic, -Canaanites and Phoenicians; (4) Hebraic, -Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Hebrews. The southern Semites comprised, (1) the Sabeans; (2) the Ethiopians; (3) the Arabs.²

The Canaanites were the pre-Hebrew inhabitants of Palestine, which received not only the direct immigration from the desert, but also what G.A. Smith calls "the backwash" from Babylonia and Egypt.³ According to Babylonian inscriptions the invasion of Palestine by Semitic tribes began before B.C. 3,000. Babylonian influence was paramount for a time, but about B.C. 1600 Egypt gained the ascendancy in Palestine. As a result of these invasions the land was peopled with a mixed population.⁴

Biblical tradition relates the ancestors of the Hebrews to the Chaldeans and the Arameans (Gen. 11:31; 24:3,4,10; 27:43;). Prof. McCurdy thinks that it

¹See Barton: Semitic Origins, ch.I.

²See Hastings Dictionary Bible, vol.V, p.86f.

³Historical Geography of The Holy Land, p.8f.

⁴Kent: History Of The Hebrew People, vol.I, ch.4.

is highly probable that the common ancestors of the Hebrews were Aramean (cf. Deut.26:5;), and that their residence on the lower Euphrates led to an admixture of Babylonian elements. And this, he says, "prevents us on the one hand from classing the Hebrews definitely with any single one of the other great divisions, and suggests to us that their kinship with all of them may help to account for their marvellous race qualities, as well as for the unmatched intellectual and moral force of their choicest representatives."⁵

The Semites were intensely subjective in their thinking, a fact which helps to explain their profound religious sense; they attributed everything to supernatural agencies. And besides this psychological trait, their environment was another factor which contributed to the development of their religious ideas. Roaming over the barren tracts of Arabia in search of pasture land, it was natural that they should regard the spirit that inhabited the oasis as the most beneficent of deities, possessing as it did, life-giving powers. "It was natural that practically all Semitic deities were thought to be closely connected with life processes, and to be especially interested in fertility and reproduction."⁶ The words of George Adam Smith, spoken in another connection, are fully descriptive of the Arabian home of the Semites: "It is a very empty and a very silent world, yet every stir of life upon it excites. Therefore the greater vigilance, and man's faculties relieved from the rush and confusion of events, formed the instinct of marking and reflecting upon every single phenomenon."⁷

Any discussion of the development of the cultus of Israel must start from a survey of the cultic practices of the primitive Semitic world. The prophetic historian took cognizance of the Semitic background of the Hebrew people and religion. And that which he recognized Old Testament scholars now take for granted. It is impossible in view of the flood of light which archaeolog-

⁵History Prophecy And The Monuments, Book I, p.26

⁶Barton: Religion Of Israel, p.5.

⁷Book Of The Twelve: Amos, p.76.

ical research and discovery have shed upon the religious beliefs and practices of the Semitic peoples, to deny the relation between the Hebrew ritual and that of the primitive Semites. Abram lived and moved and had his being in the Semitic world of polytheism, animism, and toemism; a world of crude moral standards, in which men offered the fruit of their bodies to propitiate their gods. The Semites are noted for the tenacity with which they cling to old established customs, beliefs, and practices.⁸ It is incredible that Abraham, in the interim between his departure from Ur and his arrival in Canaan, divested himself of every vestige of Semitic beliefs. The story of his attempt to offer his son as a sacrifice to Jahweh is sufficient contradiction of any such idea. That there are in the Old Testament traces of primitive beliefs and practices need, therefore, occasion no surprise. The religious worship of the Babylonians, from whom the father of the Hebrews came, the sacred rites of the Egyptians, among whom the Israelites sojourned for so long, and the cultic practices of the Semitic inhabitants of Canaan, among whom the Israelites settled, are now an open book which no one can read without feeling that there was much in common between the religion of the primitive Semites and that of Israel.

The Semites were idolators. They attributed supernatural power to all the striking phenomena of nature. The heavenly bodies and all of those natural forces which were beneficial to man were deified. Each country had its pantheon, and each city or clan had its patron deity. The names of the gods differed in different tribes, but in many cases the gods were identical, or were different aspects of the same divine power. Barton regards the cults of the various Semitic peoples as survivals of the primitive Semitic cult of Ishtar.⁹ The name of the primitive goddess Ishtar is preserved in the Old Testament as Ashtoreth. Among the Phoenicians she was known as Ashtart, and to the Greeks as Astarte.

⁸See Curtiss: Primitive Semitic Religions.

⁹See Semitic Origins, p.82.

Jahweh, the God of Israel, was at first but one of the many deities of the Semitic world. No doubt many of the primitive Semitic ideas and rites were associated with His worship in the early period. By keeping this in mind the attitude of the prophets to the cultus, and the extent to which their teaching influenced it will be the better understood. The Jahweh of the cultus was not the God of whom the prophets conceived. He was a tribal God and was worshipped as such. Jahweh was to Israel what Chemosh was to Moab, their national God(cf. Jud. 11:24;). And like other peoples they pictured their God under the image of animal forms(cf. Ex. 32, I. Kings 12:28;).

The gods of the Semites were commonly associated with sacred places and sacred objects. The objects to which sacred significance was attached were those which inspired feelings of awe and wonder in primitive man, such as water gushing out of a rock. "Modern Semites still hold this belief in sacred wells or springs, which are conceived to be under the control of a saint or spirit."¹⁰ A tree, to which life-giving emotions and perceptions were attributed, was regarded as a symbol of the life-giving power of the deity. "There are numerous examples," says Curtiss, "of sacred trees among Syrians and Bedouins, from one end of the country to the other. Some of these are at shrines and are sacred merely as the property of the saint. There are many trees apart from shrines, which are believed to be possessed by spirits, to whom vows and sacrifices are made."¹¹

This common belief of the Semites throws light upon the frequent references in the early literature of Israel to certain trees(cf. Gen. 13:18; 14:13; 18:1; Deut. 11:30; Jud. 9:37; 6:11; Hosea 4:13;). Barton affirms that there are "traces that the date-palm was sacred in Israel." Deborah sat under a palm tree(Jud. 4:5;), the inference being that "the sacred tree helped her prophetic inspiration."¹² There are indications that the palm tree, if not actually worshipped in Israel, and I know of no sufficient ground for supposing that it was, was yet held in high regard(cf. Ex. 12:56; Deut. 34:3; Jud. 1:16; 3:13;

¹⁰See Curtiss: Primitive Semitic Religions Of To-Day, p.88f

¹¹Ibid, p.90f. ¹²Semitic Origins, p.89f.

Ezek.41:18;).

Great rocks or masses of stone were regarded as the dwelling place of deity, and this belief persist[^] to this day among the Semites.¹³ Curtiss in this connection calls attention to the use of the term 'rock' in a number of passages as a term for God(cf.Deut:32:4,15,18,30,31; II.Sam.23:3; Isa.30:9;), and he asks, "May it not be that this name for God among the Semites may go back to a time when the rock was looked upon as the medium of divine revelation?-----It seems quite clear that when Jacob took the stone which he had put under his head as a pillow, and raised it up as a pillar, poured oil upon it, and called it 'house of God,' he was on the same plane as the ignorant Moslems to-day who conceive of the weli, who is practically their God, as dwelling in a rock."¹⁴

The discoveries of archaeology have shown that every community had its sacred shrine or sanctuary, which was the center of its religious life, and where the worship of the deity was carried on according to prescribed ritual. Great religious centers flourished in Egypt and Babylonia from earliest times. An organized priesthood was attached to the temples, in which an elaborate ritual or worship was carried on. According to Jastrow, Babylonian inscriptions give the impression that Babylonia was covered with temples and sacred shrines.¹⁵ Of course, among nomadic peoples the worship would of necessity be conducted on a very much more simple scale.

From what is now known of other peoples, it is believed that the Hebrews modelled their sacred shrines after those of foreign cults. The sacred ark was not peculiar to Israel; it had parallels in both Egypt and Babylonia. The Tabernacle is said to have been patterned after an Egyptian type of sanctuary. And the temple in its general arrangement resembled those of Phoenicia and Egypt. In fact, according to Prof. Sayce, Solomon's Temple was probably

¹³See Curtiss: Primitive Semitic Religions, p.88f.

¹⁴Ibid, p.88.

¹⁵Hastings Dictionary of The Bible, single vol. p.580f.

patterned after "the great temple of Melkarth which Hiram had just completed at Tyre."¹⁶ The sacrificial system of the Hebrews had much in common with Semitic religion. Sacrifice was the principal rite in the service of the deity.

In ancient Egyptian religion the god was presented with a daily offering of food, and, besides this, gifts were brought to the altar in the court of the temple. The food was first set on the table of the god and then later it was eaten by the priests or distributed among the worshippers. This practice was observed in Babylonia. It has its Hebrew counterpart in the table of shewbread, an ancient institution in Israel(I.Sam.21:6;).

In Babylonia, a large variety of sacrifices were offered to the gods, among the most common of which were the products of the land. Animal sacrifices included bullocks, sheep, goats, fish, and birds. The most common of these was probably a lamb or a kid, for the worshipper is frequently represented on the monuments with one or other of these animals in his arms. There were private as well as public sacrifices, as in the Hebrew system, of which the deity received only a part. The sacrifices, as in the Hebrew system, provided an income for the priests who also offered sacrifices in their own behalf. One form of sacrifice referred to in Babylonian inscriptions as 'shelma' or peace-offering, appears to have been similar to the Hebrew 'shelamim' or peace-offering. A similar offering was known to the Phoenicians. The libation was a common form of offering, and in the ritual of the Babylonians libations of water had a prominent place. It is implied in Deut.32:38; that drink offerings were common among heathen peoples.

There was a great increase of sacrificial offerings, and a multiplication of all offerings during the religious festivals in Egypt and in Babylonia.

¹⁶The Early History Of The Hebrews, p.467.

The Old Testament testifies to an elaborate worship carried on at the high-places. Archaeological research has shown that the high-place consisted of an altar, a series of standing stones which marked the sanctuary, the asherah or sacred pole, the laver, a sacred cave, and a place for depositing refuse. The main feature of the ritual of sacrifice at the high-place apparently was the shedding of the blood of the victim. Artificial depressions in the surface of the rock or stones discovered by archaeologists, are thought to have been receptacles for the sacrificial blood. Human sacrifice was a common rite in Canaan, but both in Babylonia and among the Hebrews an animal was substituted for the life of a human being(cf.Gen.Ch.22).

Marti has declared that, "the cultus is the last place in which to look for anything distinctively Israelitish as compared with the customs of neighboring peoples."¹⁷ And in view of the great similarity of primitive Semitic rites to those of the Hebrews this statement is not quite so startling as it at first sight appears to be. "No religion," says Dr.Galloway, "has existed without acts of worship, some form of cultus is essential if the reverence and devotion which are characteristic of piety are to be maintained and fostered."¹⁸ The Hebrews appear to have simply adapted the ordinary Semitic ritual to the worship of their God Jahweh. It was this very process of adaptation that aroused the opposition of the prophets, who regarded it as beclouding the essentially ethical and spiritual character of Jahweh. The prophets sought a cult that would reflect, so far as a cult might, the true character of Jahweh rather than becloud it. And when later attempts were made to purify the cultus it was done through bringing the old forms into harmony with the ethical character of Israel's God. The book of Deuteronomy, the Priestly Code, and the Psalter, show to what extent the cultus of old Israel was influenced by the religious and ethical idealism of the prophets. There

¹⁷The Religion Of The Old Testament, p.13f.

¹⁸The Philosophy Of Religion, p.169.

There is this point of difference between Hebrew religion and Christianity, namely, that the sacraments of the latter were created for it by its Founder, whereas the former drew upon the common stock of Semitic religion for its rites and institutions, and these it modified to suit its own peculiar needs.

^{e/} Nor did Hebrew religion ever completely succeed in freeing itself from the primitive heathen elements which it had inherited. These heathen elements were always the occasion of lapses into heathenism on the part of Israel, because they formed a point of contact with the heathen practices of Canaan by which the purer Jahweh worship of Israel was corrupted.

When all of this is kept in mind, the marvellous thing about it all is that Hebrew religion did not completely lose its distinctiveness and Jahweh His identity by being absorbed in Semitic heathenism. That this did not happen is due to the fact that there was in Hebrew religion a positive element which not only resisted this corrupting influence of heathen Semitism, but carried it up to heights of ethical and spiritual attainment never reached in any other religion, Semitic or non-Semitic. "Wherever positive religion has come in from without there has been a change."¹⁹ The positive element in Hebrew religion was prophetism, a noble succession of God-inspired men, beginning with Moses, and without a parallel in any other religion. This is the distinctive feature in the religion of Israel, and it possessed the power to make the cultus of Israel distinctive too. It also explains why the cultus of Israel was more pure at the end than at the beginning of Israel's existence as a nation in Palestine.

¹⁹Curtiss: Primitive Semitic Religions Of To-Day, p.239.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF MOSES TO THE CULTUS.

We have seen from our study in the previous chapter that many of the rites of the Hebrew system were an inheritance from their Semitic ancestors. Consequently, Moses cannot be regarded as their originator. This fact has led some scholars to deny that Moses gave any ritual laws whatever to Israel. I am not prepared to accept this conclusion. It is, in my judgment, an arbitrary conclusion. It ignores both Hebrew tradition and the analogy of primitive religion. In the discussion that follows my purpose will be not so much to offer an apology of the theory of Mosaic authorship of the legal codes as to show just what contribution Moses made to the cultus of early Israel, and what impress he made upon the cultic practices of the Hebrew people.

There are two primitive codes of law in the book of Exodus; the older of the two is commonly called the J decalogue(Ex.34:14-28;), and the later of the two is commonly known as "The Book of the Covenant"(Ex.20-23:19;). It is in these primitive codes, if anywhere, that we are to look for Moses' contribution to the cultus of early Israel.

The primitive codes give the impression that the worship of Jahweh was one of the first things to which Moses gave his attention. And it was natural that he should have done so, since the whole life of the nation was organized on the basis of its relation to Jahweh. Provision was made for a sanctuary, altar, sacrifices, and a holy priesthood. The simplicity of the cultus was in keeping with the simple mode of life in that early period.

The sanctuary of the J E narrative was of a very simple character; it was a tent(סֹכֶלֶת) such as that in which the Bedouins dwelt. It was small and located on the outside of the camp, and it was called the "Tent of Meeting." Thither "anyone who wished to consult Jahweh" might resort(cf.Ex.33:7-11;).

When Moses entered the Tent the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door, and all the people stood reverently at the doors of their tents and bowed in worship towards the Tent of Meeting.

Prominently connected with the worship of Jahweh was a sacred object, "the Ark of the Covenant." it was the visible emblem of Jahweh's abiding presence in the midst of His people. There has been much speculation as to the contents of the ark. Because of the fact that the Egyptians and Babylonians transported the images of their gods in sacred chests, the inference has been drawn that the Hebrew ark must have contained "some object which represented the deity."¹ But whatever its contents may have been, whether meteoric stones, or stones from the sacred mount,² or the tables of the law, there is no mistaking the peculiar regard in which it was held by the Israelites. Its presence among them was an assurance that Jahweh was in their midst(cf. Num.10:35; 14:42-45; I.Sam.4:3-7;).

The existence of a sanctuary implied that provision was made for a ritual of worship. The worship would be in keeping with the simplicity of the sanctuary and with the conditions of life in the wilderness. The ritual prescriptions are found in the primitive codes. The Book of the Covenant contains such prescriptions(cf.Ex.20:2-8; 22-26; 23:14-19). It is to be noted that in the Book of the Covenant there is greater emphasis upon the fundamental duties of morality than upon ritual.³ The older of the two codes(Ex.34:14-26;)is almost entirely ritualistic in its requirements. "Loyalty to Jahweh, as the God of the nation, and fidelity to the demands of the cult is their watchword."⁴ It is possible on the basis of these two variant versions of the ritual requirements to go back to what were the original ritual prescriptions of the Mosaic period.

It was required that no other God but Jahweh should receive the worship of

¹Oesterly and Robinson: Hebrew Religion, p.144. But cf.prohibition of images in Ex.20:4; 34:17; and tradition re. contents of ark,Deut.10:5;

²Oesterly and Robinson: ibid, p.144.

³Ottley: A short History Of The Hebrews, p.66.

⁴Kent: The Origin And Permanent Value of The Old Testament, p.133.

of Israel(Ex.20:23; 34:14;). And the use of all images was prohibited in the worship of Jahweh, His was to be an imageless worship(Ex.20:23b; 34:17;). In common with the cults of primitive times the J E codes provided for the celebration of four annual festivals: the Feast of Unleavened Bread(Ex.23:15a; 34:18a;), the Feast of Weeks(Ex.23:16a; 34:22a;), the Feast of Ingathering (Ex.23:16b; 34:22b;), and the Passover(Ex.23:18b; 34:25b; cf. 12:21-23,25-27). It has been denied that any of these festivals, except the Passover, was celebrated during the wilderness period. Provision was also made for a weekly festival or rest day to be celebrated every seventh day(Ex,23:12; 34:21;).

Sacrifice, the central rite in the cults of primitive peoples, had its place in Mosaism. The reason which Moses gave Pharaoh for the demand that he let Israel go out of Egypt was, that they might go "three days journey into the wilderness and sacrifice unto Jahweh our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword"(Ex.5:3; cf.10:24f;). The covenant at Sinai was ratified by an act of sacrifice(Ex, 24:6-8;). The directions given for the construction of an altar upon which burnt-offerings and peace-offerings of sheep and oxen were to be sacrificed(Ex.20:24;), implies that sacrifice was an integral part of Mosaism. The older J code requires that everything that opens the womb be consecrated to God(Ex, 34:19f;). But this could only be done through the ritual of sacrifice. The altar was as indispensable in Mosaism as in any other religion. There can be no doubt as to the reliability of the tradition preserved in the ancient codes, which makes the altar central in the worship of Jahweh. Moses in this respect followed what was a very primitive and common practice.

The belief exists among nearly all peoples that there are certain men who stand in a close or peculiar relation to the deity, and who may, therefore, minister before the deity in an acceptable way. The setting apart, therefore,

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But, as I have already intimated, the question has been raised as to whether Moses gave Israel any ritual laws. It is the contention of the Graf-Wellhausen school that no provision was made in the Mosaic Torah for a ritual of worship; and that no ritual code existed in Israel until after the exile.

This view is based upon the following grounds.

⁵Oesterly and Robinson: Hebrew Religion, p. 146f.

(1). It is not necessary to pre-suppose a Mosaic ritual in order to explain the rite of sacrifice, which, with the Hebrews, as with the whole ancient world, constituted the main part of worship. According to the P code Moses was the author of a very elaborate sacrificial ritual which he received from God (Ex.ch.25f, Lev.ch.1f.), in which detailed directions are given covering the whole technique of sacrifice.⁶ But according to JE the "praxis of sacrifice" is very much earlier than Moses, it is as old as the race itself.⁷ Sacrifice in Israel, then, was just the perpetuation of an ancient and widespread custom, but did not possess any divine sanction.⁸

(2). The writings of the pre-exilic period support the theory of non-Mosaic origin of the ritual laws of Israel. According to the historical books that which validates sacrifice is that it is offered to the proper deity. "The antithesis is not between rite and non-rite, but between sacrifice to Jahweh and sacrifice to strange gods."⁹ There is nothing in the writings of the prophets to indicate that they regarded the cultus as other than traditional custom that existed without the sanction of Jahweh.¹⁰ According, then, to the common belief of the pre-exilic age, the cultus was a very ancient and (to the people) a very sacred usage, but not a Mosaic institution. Robertson Smith argues in a similar strain.¹¹

(3). The priestly Torah had nothing whatever to do with the cultus; it was concerned with the ethical requirements of religion alone. The prophets opposed the Torah to the cultus.¹² Robertson Smith, while acknowledging that "the religion of Israel was as old as the Exodus," affirms that the eighth century prophets "never speak of a written law of Moses," but that "they absolutely deny the existence of a binding ritual law." The conclusion at which Smith arrives is, that no provision was made in the divine Torah of Israel for the cultus; on the contrary the cultus is alien to the Torah and forms but a part

⁶Cf. The Prolegomena To The History Of Israel, p.52. ⁷Ibid, p.53.

⁸Ibid, p.54. ⁹Ibid, p.55. ¹⁰Ibid, pp.56-59.

¹¹See The Old Testament In The Jewish Church, Lecture X.

¹²Cf. The Prolegomena, pp.57-59.

of natural religion.¹³

Dr. George Adam Smith takes a similar view. Amos, he affirms, banished ceremonial from religion, and he did so "in the name of a pure and absolute righteousness," holding that ritual and sacrifice were no part of the service that God demands from men.¹⁴ Dr. Smith interprets the attitude of Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah in a similar fashion.¹⁵

The sacred festivals, with the exception of the Passover, are declared to have been the product of Canaan. Jahweh was the God of the steppe; he had nothing to do with agriculture, and Israel could expect no agricultural fruits from Him.¹⁶ The prophet Amos, says Barton, sought to get rid of the feasts, which he declared formed no part of the wilderness religion.¹⁷

Such, in brief, are the arguments advanced to support the view that the cultus was altogether foreign to Jahweh religion in the wilderness period. I find that it is possible to grant many of the premises of the Wellhausen school without at the same time accepting the conclusions that are drawn from them. It seems to me that the scholars who take this view err chiefly in what they deny rather than in what they affirm. I shall not take issue, therefore, with the arguments advanced so much as with the general conclusions of this school.

Let it be ~~It~~ be granted that it is highly improbable that Moses was the author of the very elaborate system of worship ascribed to him in certain sections of the Pentateuch. Jahweh worship was, as Budde says, of an extremely simple nature in the wilderness.¹⁸ Israel did not have an elaborate ritual. I take no exception to the statement that the cultus goes back to pre-Mosaic usage, since I have already endeavored to show that very fact.¹⁹ But in granting all of this I do not feel obliged to deny that Moses gave Israel a ritual code.

¹³The Old Testament In The Jewish Church, pp.292-298. ¹⁴Cf. The Book Of The Twelve, vol.I, pp.102-108. ¹⁵Ibid, pp.283f, 324f, 421. Book Of Isaiah, p.15. ¹⁶Cf. Budde; Religion of Israel To The Exile, pp.42f, 57f. ¹⁷Semitic Origins, p.301f. ¹⁸Religion Of Israel To The Exile, p.75. ¹⁹See chapters II and III above.

On the contrary, it strengthens my conviction that he did so, that he must have given Israel the nucleus, at least, of a ritual code. Hebrew tradition, which connects Moses with the cultus of old Israel as its founder and the author of its laws, cannot be arbitrarily ignored. It surely must have had some basis of historical fact. Wellhausen and others show a readiness to accept what the J E narratives have to say about the custom of sacrifice in the pre-Mosaic age, this information they regard as authentic. But they reveal an unwillingness to accept what these same sources have to say about any attempt on the part of Moses to regulate this ancient usage. It is just here, in my judgment, that Moses' contribution to the cultus of old Israel is to be sought. For, since the Semitic peoples generally worshipped their gods with sacrificial rites, it would become all the more imperative that some such regulatory laws be ~~from~~ made to distinguish in the ritual between what was offered to Jahweh and what to heathen gods. The J narrative reveals that of the offerings presented to Jahweh, some were acceptable and some were unacceptable (cf. Gen. ch. 4). The mere offering of a sacrifice to "the proper deity" did not in itself render it acceptable to Jahweh. How was the worshipper to know whether or not his offering would be acceptable to Jahweh? Some regulation of sacrificial offerings became necessary.

It is true that the P writer is silent as to the existence of an Israelitish cultus prior to Moses. But it is an arbitrary view that explains his silence as due to a belief that the "praxis of sacrifice" was unknown before Moses' time. That is to read into his document more than is there. "The priestly writer knew at least about the patriarchal sacrifices all that the J E histories had to tell him."²⁰ The religion of Israel began at Sinai, and it was natural for the P writer to begin at that point in his desire to establish the ritual of worship on the basis of a positive divine law. The primitive sources, while they regard the rite of sacrifice as ante-dating Moses,

²⁰See Orr: Problem Of The Old Testament, p. 156.

nevertheless betray no knowledge of any law or code of laws governing it before the time of Moses. Both of these sources preserve the tradition of a Mosaic ritual code.

If Moses adopted the Jahweh religion from the Kenites, as many scholars now hold he did,²¹ it is plausible to suppose that he took over the ritual of worship, either in its entirety or in a modified form. According to Wellhausen, the Book of the Covenant, though enjoining the offering of firstlings and gifts to Jahweh at the proper season, takes ~~as~~^{for} granted as something already known the manner in which the sacrifice or gift is to be offered, and it therefore nowhere figures as an affair for legislation.²² But it is inconceivable that Moses gave Israel a God to serve and worship and gave no laws or system by which His worship was to be regulated. It is upon the assumption that he did just this that the whole of the later P code is based. And all talk of elaboration, modification, and redaction of the earlier religious laws of Israel implies an original code. Who is more likely to have been the author of this original nucleus than the founder of Israel's religion?

The prohibition of the making and of the use of images in the worship of Jahweh is declared to be much later than the time of Moses; it implies a spiritual conception far ahead of Moses' time. The common Semitic practice of image worship, as well as its prevalence among the Israelites in the post-Mosaic period, precludes it being ascribed to Moses. The implication of this is, that the religion which Moses gave to Israel differed in no way from the nature religions of other peoples. Moses did not and could not conceive of Jahweh as a spiritual Being. And yet the same critics ask us to believe that the religion which Moses gave to Israel was so spiritual in character and in concept that no provision was made in it for the rite of sacrifice; the Torah of Jahweh was not concerned with anything so unspiritual as the cultus, but with truth, love, justice, morality alone. Such a view is self-contradictory.

²¹Cf. Budde: Religion of Israel To The Exile, pp.58ff.

²²Cf. The Prolegomena, p.53f.

It denies the Mosaic authorship on the ground that Moses was incapable of so spiritual conception of God as it implies. And, on the other hand, it holds that the prophets rejected the cultus because Moses made no provision for it in the purely spiritual and ethical religion of which he was the founder.

The majority of Old Testament scholars emphasize the ethical character of the relationship between Jahweh and Israel. Now, if Moses could conceive of that relationship as resting on an ethical rather than on a natural basis, surely it may be conceded that his conception of Jahweh Himself was spiritual. It was his profound religious insight that enabled him to break with natural religion in shifting the bond between the nation and its God from a natural to an ethical basis. And why should it be denied that his religious insight enabled him to take the second and next great step away from natural religion and conceive of Jahweh as a spiritual Being. The prevalence of image worship in early Israel is no more a legitimate argument against the spiritual character of the Mosaic cultus than image worship in the Christian church is a negation of the imageless worship of early Christianity.

The silence of Elijah and Elisha is not so significant as it has been made to appear,²³ since the struggle of these prophets was concerned with the object of Israel's worship rather than its form. Moses' conception of the spirituality of Jahweh may not have been as lofty as that of the later prophets. But there is no indication in the writings of the prophets that they were aware that in preaching against image worship, they were for the first time proclaiming the spirituality of the God of Israel. The prophets were not innovators, they were reformers who called the people back again to the ethical and spiritual ideals of Mosaism.²⁴

The great festivals, for which the primitive codes claim Mosaic authority, are declared to have formed no part of the wilderness religion. Now, it is

²³Cf. Oesterly And Robinson: Hebrew Religion, p.144.

²⁴See A.R.Gordon: The Early Traditions of Genesis, p.118f.

quite probable that the Israelites lived a semi-agricultural life during the generation preceding their entrance into Canaan. Why should it be supposed that Israel was constantly on the march? About thirty-eight years of the wilderness sojourn was spent in the immediate vicinity of Kadesh, which is now with Ain-Kades, a verdant oasis about fifty miles south of Beersheba. Here there is a bountiful water supply, and grass, fig-trees, shrubs, and flowers grow in rich profusion. With such a rich and fertile region in which to camp it would not be necessary for Israel to wander far afield in search of food and pasture. With the supplies from their flocks and herds, and such fruits as the region of Kadesh might yield, it is altogether conceivable that the transition from the nomadic to the settled agricultural stage of living had its inception during this period, and not with the settlement in Canaan.

"Agriculture is not entirely unknown to the nomadic life of the wilderness."²⁵

Two of the festivals, at least, antedate the settlement in Canaan, the Passover and the Feast of Ingathering.

The Passover feast celebrated by Israel on the eve of the Exodus from Egypt was originally a primitive Semitic festival. While it is connected with the Exodus, it is certain that its origin lay far back of it, and is to be sought in the practices of the primitive Semites. It was a spring festival of the yearning time. At this time the goddess of fertility would receive back in sacrifice some of her many gifts. "The time was appropriate since she was revealing in the spring her power through the offspring of the flocks and herds, through flowering date-palms, where her acts of fertilization were taking place, and through the nature she had given men."²⁶

The J writer does not introduce the Passover as something new. It was apparently for the purpose of celebrating this festival that Israel asked permission to go three days journey into the wilderness (Ex. 3:18; 5:1; 7:16; 8:27;

²⁵Kent: The Origin And Permanent Value Of The Old Testament, p.133.

²⁶Barton: Semitic Origins, p.110.

10:9;). The antiquity of the Passover is attested by the fact that it appears to have been a fusion of two very old and distinct observances. The rite of blood sprinkling may have been associated with the spring festival of the yearning time. The sprinkling of the blood on the tent poles as a safeguard against plague or calamity was an ancient and widespread custom. The blood at the entrance barred the way of the destroying spirit. Curtiss has furnished many instances among modern Semites of this primitive custom of blood sprinkling for the purpose of protection from evil spirits.²⁷ But "a truer and a larger view will be gained of God's methods of dealing with His people when it is seen that the Passover was a primitive institution engrained in the earlier life of Israel, and that their religious genius by divine inspiration took it up and transformed it into something greater and deeper."²⁸

There is good reason to believe that the Feast of Ingathering also goes back in its ultimate origin to nomadic times, when the Arabs gathered their supply of dates from the oases, as they still do to-day.

If the Hebrews adopted this feast from another cult it is more likely that they adopted it from the Kenites rather than the Canaanites. Barton regards it as a survival of one of the two festivals connected with the worship of the God of the Kenites, who "would be celebrated in a second festival in the autumn at the gathering of the date harvest." After the settlement in Canaan it would be interpreted as a festival of grape gathering. And the very name by which it is called in Lev.23:34; "Feast of Booths," indicates that it was regarded as a survival of nomadic days.²⁹

Thus, two of the festivals of old Israel for which divine sanction is claimed in the primitive sources, are clearly shown to have antedated the settlement in Canaan. They did not originate with Moses, but the most ancient traditions of Israel associate them with the cult of Mosaism. Moses took them

²⁷Primitive Semitic Religions, chapters XV and XVI.

²⁸MacNeile: The Book of Exodus, ad loc.

²⁹Semitic Origins, p.288.

up and adapted them to the worship of Jahweh. And both of them were of such a character that they might very appropriately be celebrated by a people who lived a semi-nomadic life, such as Israel lived in the region of Kadesh for a generation.

In respect to sacrifice, Moses, according to early Old Testament writers, exercised priestly functions; Moses was Israel's first priest. And if he adopted Jahweh religion from the Kenites, his association with Jethro, the priest of Midian, makes it all the more probable that he offered sacrifice for Israel. "The story of Ex.18 rightly understood is a story of the origin of the Hebrew priesthood in one of its primary functions, and of the priestly activity of the first Hebrew priest, Moses."³⁰ The function referred to here is the oracular, by which the priest consulted the divine oracle and communicated torah to the people concerning the divine will. But this was not the only function of the priest; the offering of sacrifice was a priestly function. And in this respect, too, Ex.18 is significant. Jethro, besides instructing Moses how he might obtain revelations of the divine will, offered sacrifice, at which Aaron and all the elders of Israel were present. Dr.Gray calls attention to the fact that it was Jethro, the guest of Moses, who offered the sacrifice, and that Moses is not mentioned among the participants. And Gray concludes: "Here we have a much modified form of a story in which Jethro comes to initiate Moses into the mode of sacrificing to Jahweh. In that case the entire narrative would present Jethro, the Midianite priest, as the first teacher of Moses, the first Hebrew priest, in two priestly functions- the sacrificial and the oracular."³¹

According to Hebrew tradition, then, as preserved in the primitive codes, Moses in addition to his many other duties, was the chief priest of the nation, giving torah and offering sacrifice. And not only is he represented as performing priestly functions, but tradition connects the Hebrew priesthood

³⁰Gray: Sacrifice In The Old Testament, p.206

³¹Ibid, p.208.

originally with him. That to which Hebrew tradition bears witness is supported by the analogy of ancient custom, namely, "that some form of priesthood would be established by Moses; that the priesthood would be hereditary, and that the priesthood would also inherit from their founder some traditional lore(beyond what is contained in Ex.20-23)on matters of ceremonial observance."³²

The Hebrew tribes, prior to the Exodus, were undoubtedly governed by the common religious usages of the Semitic world. The cultic practices of the patriarchal period were primitive and spontaneous in character; there was no law which either required or regulated them. But from the time of Moses on the cultus of Old Israel appears to have been governed by a prescribed ritual, i.e., it had the sanction of what was believed to be divinely revealed law. The cultus of the Mosaic period was, indeed, the perpetuation of an ancient and widespread custom; but the religious genius of Moses heightened by divine inspiration, took up the ancient rites and customs of the Semitic race, adapted them to the worship of Jahweh, and transformed them into something greater and deeper. The process of differentiation, therefore, between Hebrew religion and Semitic heathenism began with Moses. It is generally agreed that Jahweh religion was transformed at the hands of Moses. "Even though Jahweh was originally the name of the God of Sinai, it immediately received a higher significance under the Israelites than that which it had possessed as the God of the confederate tribes of Mt.Sinai."³³ The character of the God whom Moses introduced to Israel at Sinai differed from that of all other gods; He was a spiritual and an ethical Being. Jahweh's relations with Israel rested on ethical sanctions, and it implied mutual obligations of an ethical character. Such a conception of the God of Israel could not but be reflected in the ritual of worship which Moses gave to Israel.

It is not to be denied that there were parallels in heathen Semitic worship

³²Driver: Introduction To The Literature Of The Old Testament, p.153

³³Budde: Religion Of Israel To The Exile, pp.58ff.

to elements of the Hebrew cultus. But this should not be permitted to obscure the distinctive contribution of Mosaism,- its conception of Jahweh as expressed in the first two requirements of the Mosaic code. It was out of these that there developed the great prophetic doctrines of the unity and the spirituality of God. If Hebrew religion was to be distinct from common Semitic religion, and if Israel's God was to be differentiated from all other gods, it became imperative that some system of worship be promulgated that would ensure this. It is all well enough to say that "the antithesis is not between rite and non-rite, but between sacrifice to Jahweh and sacrifice to strange gods." The very similarity of the worship would seem to demand some regulation of the worship in order to differentiate Jahweh from heathen gods. And such regulation the primitive codes ascribe to Moses.³⁴ Moses learned very early in his experience with Israel that if he did not provide for a regulated worship the alternative would be an unregulated worship; Israel, he learned, would worship Jahweh through the gross forms and rites of heathen Semitism(cf. Ex. ch.32). Such worship would but obscure the spiritual and ethical character of Jahweh and degrade the people. Hence, the movement which had for its aim the spiritualizing and ethicizing of the cultic practices of old Israel may truly be said to have begun with Moses. He demanded the exclusive worship of Jahweh, to whom alone Israel must give its homage. Unlike the gods of the heathen, Jahweh ruled in solitary state, He had no feminine counterpart; and, therefore, the sexual license which was so marked a characteristic of heathen naturalistic religion had no place in the cultus of Mosaism. The use of images was prohibited. Jahweh was a spiritual Being of whome no physical representation could be made. The ark was the symbol of His presence in Israel.

The influence of the religious and ethical idealism of the first of Israel's prophets upon the cultus of old Israel is reflected in the primitive J and E

³⁴See Orr: Problem Of The Old Testament, p.157.

codes, both of which are prophetic in spirit and in teaching. And it is a very significant fact that the great prophets of the later period constantly appealed to the ideals of Moses in their criticism of the cultus. From the time of Moses on, prophetism was the great spiritual and ethical force which sought to so shape the ritual of worship in Israel that it might be distinct from all other systems and reflect the distinctive character of Israel's God and of His relation to His people. This distinctiveness consisted not so much in the forms or rites of worship as in the character of the object of Israel's worship, the spirit of the worshipper, and the motives that prompted his worship.

That Israel did not long remain true to the Mosaic ideal of worship is very evident from an examination of the early historical records. The religious practices of Israel in Canaan are in many ways contrary to that which is prescribed in the primitive Mosaic code. But this does not imply, as some critics argue, the non-existence of a Mosaic code. There is a much more reasonable explanation than that, and one which students of Christian history, who know to what extent Christianity has been influenced by the pagan rites and customs of the lands into which it has gone, should find no difficulty in accepting. It is to be found in the transition from the simple life of the wilderness to the more highly organized and settled agricultural mode of life in Canaan, as I shall endeavor to show in the next chapter.

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL
IDEALISM OF THE PROPHETS ON THE
CULTUS OF OLD ISRAEL

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CHAPTER V.
THE CORRUPTING INFLUENCE OF CANAAN ON THE
CULTUS OF OLD ISRAEL

The Tel-el-Amarna Letters furnish us with the most important source of information on conditions in Canaan in the pre-Israelite period. They date from the middle of the 14th. century B.C., and, written in cuneiform, they bear witness to the influence of Babylonian culture, while their contents show that Egypt was supreme politically.¹ These letters reflect an advanced civilization.

The people who inhabited Canaan were for the most part of Semitic stock. War between the various tribes was common, but a common danger united them.² Agriculture was their chief means of subsistence. They worshipped male and female deities, a form of worship that was attended by licentious and degrading rites. This worship was probably a survival of the primitive Semitic cult of Ishtar, the goddess of fertility. Into the midst of these peoples and of this civilization the desert-dwelling tribes of Israel forced their way.

According to the book of Judges the several tribes had to conquer their allotted territory. But this they were unable to do. The Judges' account probably represents what was the actual manner of settlement in Canaan.³ The Israelites, unable to drive out the inhabitants of the land, fought for a foothold in it, and settled down alongside of its heathen inhabitants from whom they were to learn the arts and customs of their new mode of life. It was this condition that was pregnant with peril for the simple but pure Jahweh worship of the Mosaic period.

The settlement in Canaan vitally affected the whole life of Israel, and in its religious beliefs and practices most of all. The Hebrew cultus had, as we

¹Jeremias: The Old Testament In The Light Of The Ancient East, vol. I, p. 335f.

²Ibid, p. 336

³See Driver: Literature Of The Old Testament, pp. 114, 162.

have seen, a Semitic background. The religion which Moses gave to Israel was superimposed upon beliefs and practices which had prevailed among Semitic peoples from time immemorial, beliefs and practices which were deeply engrained in the cults of Canaan long before Israel entered the land. But when Israel entered Canaan Mosaism was scarcely a generation old, a fact that is too often lost sight of, so that from the very first the new-born faith was in peril of its life. The crude inherited tendencies of primitive Semitic religion were so pronounced in the Israelites that the simple and pure worship of Jahweh had to struggle for its existence from the first against the nature cults, as the stories of the golden calf(Ex.32), and of Baal-peor(num.25) show.

1. The Early Period Of Settlement.

One of the first requirements of Mosaism was that no other god was to receive any homage from Israel except Jahweh. But according to the book of Judges Israel had no sooner been settled in Canaan than they began to serve the Baalim. "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of Jahweh and served Baalim and Ashtoroth"(Jud.2:13;). Baalism was a nature religion, and the Baalim were closely connected with the soil, they were the givers of fertility. Baal and Ashtoroth symbolized the male and female principles of life. Here is something that had no place in Mosaism. Jahweh had no female consort, and consequently, the revolting practices carried on in the name of religion had no place in His worship.

The Israelites in adapting themselves to the new conditions took over the same general religious ideas and customs which were held and practiced by the Canaanites. The soil could not be successfully cultivated apart from the proper observance of the ritual of Baal, the lord or owner of the land.⁴ Jahweh apparently came to be regarded as one of the Baalim of Canaan. Budde seems to take the view that Israel offered its worship to the Baals of Canaan and

⁴Cf. McCurdy: History Prophecy And The Monuments, section 61.

not to Jahweh. "In order to fruitful harvests the worship of Baal must not be neglected. Jahweh was the God of the steppe, who still dwelt at Sinai, hence they could expect no agricultural fruits from Him. ----- Israel was forced to learn the service of the Baal as part of the art of agriculture."⁵ There is some truth in this statement. The close connection of the Baal with the soil, and the necessity of cultivating it in accordance with his ritual, would no doubt encourage an adoration of the Baal on the part of Israel. Yet, on the whole, the worship of Israel was offered to Jahweh. The transition led to a modification of Israel's conception of Jahweh, but He was indisputably the God of Israel. "Change of place and circumstance, which among the Semites worked havoc with the national beliefs and customs, did not compel the wandering tribes of the Hebrews to discard Jehovah."⁶ There was apostasy(Jud.5:8;), but alongside of it there was faith in Jahweh(Jud.6:13; 11:10;). Dr. Wade is closer to the truth than Budde when he says, "It seems probable that the declension from Mosaic principles consisted less in the substitution of the worship of Canaanite deities for that of Jehovah than in the combination of the two."⁷

Another great ideal of the Mosaic cultus was that the worship of Jahweh was to be an imageless worship. There was no image of God in the Tent of Meeting, the ark was the only material symbol of Jahweh's presence among His people.

There are many references to images which figured in the worship of the Israelites after the settlement. Israel served the Baalim and the asherim(אֲשֵׁרִים), Jud.3:7; The asherah was a sacred pole and an indispensable feature of Baal worship. It stood beside the altar(cf.I.Kings 16:33; II.Kings 13:6; 14:16; 18:4; 21:3; 23:6,15;), and while there is some uncertainty as to its real significance, it is quite clear from references in

⁵The Religion Of Israel To The Exile, p.57f.

⁶McCurdy: History Prophecy And The Monuments, section 62.

⁷Old Testament History, p.278.

the Old Testament that it was an image of some kind(cf. I.Kings 15:13; where it is referred to as a "fearful idol." Cf. also II.Kings 21:7;). There is no doubt that it was an image or symbol of the goddess Ashtaroth. But whatever it was it had no place in the worship of Jahweh. Gideon was commanded to burn it(Jud.6:26;), and it was strictly prohibited in Deut.16:1;(cf. Ex.34:13; I Kings 14:15,23; II Kings 17:10; 23:14; Isa.17:8; Mic.5:13;).

The sacred pillar is frequently mentioned, this is the *maçgebah*(מַצֶּבֶה). It was a stone pillar or stump, and reference is made to it in Gen.28:18; 31:13; 35:14; as a memorial of a divine manifestation. But the pillars of this period were sacred stones or pillars in connection with the altar. That they were idolatrous objects seems to be certain. They were part of the furnishings of the cult of Baal, probably they embodied the spirit or spirits of the sanctuary. They are condemned in all of the codes(cf.Ex.23:4; 34:13; Deut.16:22; Lev.26:1;), and in the book of Kings(I Kings 14:23; 17:10; 18:4; 23:14; cf Micah 5:12;).

Mention is also made of the teraphim and the ephod. There is some doubt as to what these really were. In Exodus the ephod is part of the priestly vestments, but in the records of the early Canaanite period it appears to be an image of some kind. Gideon made an image of gold- an ephod -which became a snare to Israel(Jud.8:27;). Reference is made to the "carved image of the ephod." It is implied in I Sam. 23:6ff; 30:7; that the ephod was a means of divination(cf.Hosea 3:4;). Kittel takes the view that the worship of Jahweh was practiced under the form of an image.⁸ The teraphim seems to have been a household god(jud.17:5;), and made in size and shape like a man(cf.I Sam.18:13,16;). It was some kind of an idol to which reverence was given(Jud.17:5; 18:14,17;). The cult of the teraphim was practiced in the house of Saul, nor was it condemned by David. It is thought to have been a survival of the Semitic worship of ancestors.⁹ If it were , then it becomes all the more likely

⁸History Of The Hebrews, vol.II, p.201

⁹Cf.Kittel,ibid, p.202; see Budde: Religion of Israel, p.64f

^h/ that it was a Canaanitis accretion(cf.I Sam.15:23; II Kings 23:24;).

The story of Micah and the Danites makes it clear that images were associated with the worship of Jahweh in this period. Kittel points out that no image of Jahweh was associated with His worship at Shiloh, and that Samuel is never mentioned in connection with an ephod in the sense of an image. And he affirms that "only when the ark disappeared did the teraphim come into prominence, and when interest revived those elements foreign to the higher Jahwism retreated again."¹⁰ But there are passages which indicate that the ark itself was regarded with something akin to idolatry(cf.I Sam.4:3ff; 5:1ff; 6:19ff; II Sam. 6:6ff;). The divine presence was so closely associated with the ark that its loss to Israel could be described in one word, "Ichabod," "The glory is departed from Israel"(I Sam.4:21;).

In contrast to the one sanctuary, the Tent of Meeting, of the wilderness cult, is the multiplicity of sanctuaries in this early period. Jahweh was worshipped at the high places at Bethlehem(I Sam.9:12-14; 19:25; 16:5; 20:6;), at Bethel(I Sam.10:3;), at Hebron(II Sam.15:7;), at Gilgal(I Sam.11:14f;), at Mizpah(I Sam.7:6,16;), at Ramah(I Sam.7:17;), at Gibeon, "the great high-place"(I Kings 3:4;), at Dan(Jud.18:30;), and other places. Thus it will be seen that the worship of Jahweh was carried on at the local sanctuaries or high-places from one end of the land to the other.

There are two festivals which I have shown above antedated the invasion of Canaan by the Israelites. But there can be no doubt that contact with the nature religions led to the adoption of new feasts from the Canaanites. There are references to the feasts of the harvest and of the vintage(cf.Jud.9:27; 1 21:19;). Reference is made to the festival of the new moon, which "originally appears to have been a family feast celebrated with a clan sacrifice."¹¹ The festivals were of a joyous character, being attended with music and dancing.

¹⁰History Of The Hebrews, vol.II, p.203.

¹¹Kent: Israel's Laws And Legal Precedents, p.262.

While priestly functions were performed by non-Levites(cf. I Sam.14:32ff; II Sam.5:17ff; 6:14;), yet there are indications of a growing priestly class in the preference given to the Levites(Jud.17:13;). The sacrificial offerings seem to have been more varied and more frequently offered. Allusion is made to burnt-offerings(I Sam.7:7; 10:8;), propitiatory offerings(I Sam.1:24; 7:6; 10:3; II Sam.23:16;), peace-offerings(I Sam.10:8; 11:15;), and votive offerings(Jud.11:30f; II Sam.15:7; cf.I Sam.1:11;).

It will be seen from this brief survey that many of the religious practices of the Israelites after the settlement in Canaan are contrary to what we have seen were the ideals of Mosaism. The pure Jahweh worship of the wilderness period was corrupted by contact with the heathen cults of Canaan. Mosaism, yet in its infancy, had not become firmly enough rooted in the life of Israel to either displace the inherited customs and beliefs of the people, or to resist the corrupting influence of the pagan cults of Canaan.

2. The Eighth Century B. C.

a/ The process of syncretism which began after the settlement in Canaan was gradual. The worship of Jahweh became more and more heathenish, until by the eighth century it had degenerated into a round of heathen rites, more especially in the N. Kingdom, less so in Judah.

There is abundant evidence that worship at the high-places was carried on uninterruptedly until the time of Hezekiah, who is said to have removed the high-places(II Kings 18:4;), only to be restored again by Manasseh(II Kings 21:3ff;). They were finally outlawed in Josiah's reformation, B.C.621(II Kings 23:4ff;). In N.Israel Bethel and Dan seem to have been the chief sanctuaries (I Kings13:32; II Kings 23:19;), that at Bethel was a royal sanctuary, being patronized by the king(I Kings 12:3; Amos 7:13; cf.9:1;). But these were not the only sanctuaries; there were sanctuaries at Gilgal, Beersheba, Mizpah,

Mt. Tabor, and Mt. Carmel, which were held in high regard(cf. Amos 4:4; 5:5; Hosea 4:15; 9:15; Amos 8:14; Hosea 5:1; Micah 7:14; I Kings 18:30;).

It can be gathered from what the prophets say about the high-places that they were the occasion of much corruption to the worship of Jahweh. The prophets regarded the worship at the high-places as an abomination against which the wrath of God was directed. There the people sought counsel from the graven images(Hosea 4:12;), offered sacrifice, burned incense, and indulged in licentious rites(Hosea 4:13,14; cf. I Kings 14:23;). It was not just the worship of Baal, but the intermixture of Jahweh worship with heathen rites of which Hosea speaks. There are the "Bamothaven," high-places of iniquity(Hosea 10:8;), at which the most abominable and shameless practices were carried on in the name of religion.¹² Bethel- "House of God" - had become Beth-aven, - "House of Iniquity," and Gilgal a place of idolatry(Hosea 4:15;). Such was the heathen character of the worship carried on at the high-places that the prophets predicted their complete destruction(Hosea 10:8; Amos 7:9;). Micah looked upon Samaria and Jerusalem as high-places in whose worship of Jahweh heathen rites were intermixed(1:5;), and both of which, therefore, will be destroyed. The Prophetic historian looked upon the establishment of high-places as the chief sin of N. Israel(I Kings 12:31ff; 3:2,32;), and as chiefly responsible for the evils which later afflicted the nation and led to its undoing(II Kings 17:7f;).

Judah was no different from N. Israel in this respect, for the people there "also built high-places," etc.(I Kings 14:23;). There is but one reference in Isaiah to the high-places, and that a quotation from the speech of Rabshakeh, the Assyrian captain, who infers that Hezekiah's removal of the high-places was an act of apostasy from Jahweh(II Kings 18:22;). This implies that the worship of Jahweh at the high-places was a practice of long- standing.

The local sanctuaries became centres of corruption and the occasion of

¹² Cf. Kent: A History Of The Hebrew People, vol.II, p.90f.

much licentiousness among the Hebrews. They are consistently condemned by the prophets; and even the few kings whose character and policies are generally approved by the prophetic historian have their commendation qualified by the statement that, "nevertheless the high-places were not removed"(cf. I Kings 15:11ff; II Kings 12:2; 14:3f; 15:1;).

The excavations of archaeology, together with the references to the high-places in the Old Testament, make it possible to form a fairly complete picture of them. They were open-air sanctuaries on the top or the slope of a hill, hence their name, bamah or bamoth(בָּמֹת , בָּמָה). The most prominent features of the high-places were: (1) an altar, the shape of which varied according to its use; (2) a series of upright stones or pillars of various sizes, which may have embodied the spirit of the shrine; (3) the asherah or sacred pole, which some scholars think was a symbol of phallic worship, a theory which others deny,¹³ but religious prostitution was unquestionably a part of the cult of Baal and Ashtaroah(cf. I Kings 14:22-24; Hosea 4:13;); (4) the laver for cleansing sacrificial victims; (5) rooms or caves where the sacrifice may have been eaten by the worshippers, or perhaps used by the priests for various purposes; (6) a depository for the refuse of sacrificial offerings.

The cultus of the high-place consisted chiefly of the rite of sacrifice and the celebration of harvest festivals, which were attended with drunkenness and licentiousness(cf. Jud.9:27;). In the rite of sacrifice the blood was probably offered to the deity, as seems to be indicated by the discovery of artificial depressions in the surface of the rock, which were probably receptacles for the blood of the victim. Human sacrifice was no doubt offered at the high-places(cf. II Kings 3:27; 16:3; Micah 6:7; Jer.18:5;)as part of the Canaanite ritual. Many discoveries have been made in Palestine of the skeletons of infants in jars, which point to the custom of offering the first-

¹³See Article "High-Places" in International Standard Bible Encycl. vol.III, p.1390f.

born. The purpose of the sacrifices was to acknowledge the cooperation of the deity in the production of the fruits of the soil, and to ensure his continued goodwill.

That images were still a part of the worship of Jahweh seems to be clearly implied in the statements of the prophets. Northern Israel worshipped Jahweh under the symbolism of bronze calves(Hos.8:5f;). The ephod and the teraphim are still features of the worship; they are mentioned with the sacrifice as something of which Israel shall be bereft(Hos.3:4;). The sacred pillars and the asherim were also features of Jahweh worship. The prophets pronounced judgment against them because they were symbols of idolatrous worship(Hos.10:1,2; Amos 8:14; Mic.5:13,14; Isa.17:8; Deut.7:5;). In Judah, in spite of the temple at Jerusalem with its imageless worship, the use of images in the worship at the high-places went on unchecked, so that Isaiah could declare, "Their land also is full of idols"(cf.2:8; 2:18,20; 30:22;).

The character of the priests as portrayed by the prophets has no redeeming features. The people's ignorance of Jahweh and of His worship is due to the failure of the priests to instruct them in the law of God. They are a professional class who seek to serve their own selfish ends rather than the true end of their calling. They are condemned, not because there is no place for them in the worship of Jahweh, but because they have perverted their holy office to unholy ends. They fatten on the sin of the people, and become enriched through their iniquity(Hos.4:6-9;). Instead of leading the people into a clearer knowledge of and a closer fellowship with God, they have but lured them farther away from Him into sin(Hos.5:1;). The priests were guilty of robbery with violence, and of other abominable things(Hos.6:9;). Even the priests of Jerusalem desecrated their holy office for gain(Mic.3:11; Zeph.3:4;).

The cultus of the eighth century was conducted on a very elaborate scale.

Sacrifices in abundance were offered to Jahweh, and great crowds of worshippers attended the religious festivals (Am. 4:4f; 5:21ff; 8:10; Hos. 2:11; 4:13f; 6:6; 13:2;). The scenes around the temple at Bethel were animated and stirring. There were constant comings and goings of happy singing worshippers, who had come there to sacrifice and pay their vows unto Jahweh. Such was their zeal in this respect that Amos ironically urged them to bring their sacrifices every morning and their tithes every three days (4:4;). The whole round of sacred festivals- the great annual feasts of the harvest and the vintage, the sabbaths, and the new moons- was duly and faithfully kept.

That which Amos saw at Bethel was, in all probability, duplicated at the various sanctuaries throughout the land, though perhaps not on so elaborate a scale as at Bethel. But at all the sanctuaries there ^{were} demonstrations of great religious fervor; Jahweh was honored as the Baal of Israel. He had proven Himself worthy of their gifts, and they on their part were not wanting in gratitude and loyalty to Him. They rendered unto Him the worship which they thought, and believed, He most desired; they gave Him the firstlings of the flock, and the firstfruits of the ground without stint (cf. Amos 4:5;). Nor had they given them in vain, for Jahweh had blessed them with great power and prosperity.

In Judah, similar zeal and punctiliousness were manifested in the worship of Jahweh. Great crowds thronged the temple courts; the festivals of the new moon, the sabbath, and the solemn assemblies were celebrated (Isa. 1:11ff;). Isaiah speaks of the multitude of the sacrifices which the people bring to God. Micah noted the fervor with which the people entered into the sacrificial service (6:6;). And according to II Kings 16:15; regular morning and evening sacrifices were offered to God.

Such was the cultus of the eighth century as we are able to reconstruct it

from the statements respecting it in the prophetic writings. It was a popular syncretistic cultus. Jahweh was loyally and enthusiastically worshipped, but through the media of heathen rites. The people showed no lack of generosity in their gifts to Jahweh. But in this respect they were no better than their heathen neighbors, who gave of the fruit of their bodies as gifts to their gods, as the inscription on the Moabite stone reveals.

But then came the prophets, and, in spite of all the elaborate display of religiosity, they liked it not; it had a hollow ring to it, and it foreboded evil to the nation. The prophets could not share the confidence of the people in their own goodness and security, because they did not share their conception of what constituted religion.



PART III
THE PRE-EXILIC PROPHETS AND THE CULTUS

CHAPTER VI
THE ATTITUDE OF THE PROPHETS TO THE CULTUS

I have endeavored to trace the development of the cultus from its earliest beginnings down to the period of the literary prophets. In the survey of the eighth century cultus I had occasion to note what the prophets had to say about it. But I shall now examine their statements more closely with a view to determining their attitude to the cultus, after which I shall seek an interpretation of it.

1. Amos And The Cultus

Amos was the first of the prophets to lift his voice in condemnation of the cultus of Israel. His writings contain a number of references to the cultus, but the chief passage, and the one most frequently quoted in this connection, is that in chapter 5:21-25; Since this passage states quite definitely the prophet's position in respect to the cultus I shall select it for consideration.

Chapter 5 is an oracle of judgment upon the house of Israel; it is a qinah (קִינָה), Amos' funeral dirge over Israel. Following the elegy comes an exhortation to repentance, for it is only by repentance and the restoration of ethical righteousness that the threatened judgment can be averted; it is imminent but it may be averted. "For thus saith Jahweh to the house of Israel, Seek ye me and live"(v.4). By seeking God, which meant the abandonment of all their evil ways, the nation doomed to death may yet be spared. Repentance is the condition of life. But, as in all true repentance, there is not only a turning to but also a turning from, Amos urges, "Seek not Bethel, and come not to Gilgal-----for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel

shall come to naught."(v.5) The clear inference of these two verses is, that Jahweh is no longer to be found in the sanctuaries to which Israel resorted. Bethel, the house of God which had been made into a house of iniquity(cf.Hos. 4:15;)shall be reduced to nothingness(7:27); and Gilgal, "the roller shall be rolled away." Thus, the sanctuaries at which an idolatrous worship was carried on were doomed to destruction.

In verses 14f. the prophet reiterates what he urged in vv.4-6, "Seek good and not evil, that ye may live." God and good are one; goodness has its sanction in Him, for He is good; and the quest of goodness leads to Him, but the quest of evil leads away from Him. Therefore, "Seek ye me, seek good, and live. But seek not Bethel, seek not evil. And it shall be so, Jahweh, God of hosts, shall be with you as ye say." Amos implies that the people are self-deluded; they boast that God is with them and that they are His people. But it is a false claim they make, He is not with them. The presence of Jahweh has been withdrawn from their sanctuaries, which have become a savor of death unto them. Nor will Jahweh bless Israel with His presence until they rid themselves of the presence of evil in their midst. "Hate the evil," cultivate a strong aversion of evil, for only by so doing can evil-doing be averted: "and love the good," for as the love of the good increases evil will become more and more abhorrent: "and establish justice in the gate," give to every man his just rights, let equity prevail. And then, "perhaps Jahweh will be gracious to a remnant of Joseph." This, says Amos, is the way to fellowship with God, this is the way of life.

We come now to the most important of Amos' utterances respecting the cultus, vv.20-25. The prophet has been dealing with the popular conception of the Day of Jahweh, into which he puts a new and an entirely different content. It is not a day to be desired, he warns, for the day of Jahweh's judgment will be a

day of deep darkness upon Israel. Let them be under no delusion and cherish no false hopes, for all that is contrary to the righteous will of God must be swept away. And then turning to the cultus he ~~again~~ declared in behalf of Jahweh: "I hate, I despise your feasts." the two verbs joined without a conjunction express the extreme abhorrence with which God regarded their sacred festivals (the verb סָרַף implies rejection or refusal. Cf. Prov. 21:27; Isa. 1: 11-14; Jer. 6:20;). The smell of the incense which accompanied the sacrifice had become obnoxious to Jahweh. Therefore, He declares, He will no longer take any delight in the festivals by which they seek to honor Him. The rite of sacrifice itself, around which the cult was built, has become unacceptable to God; "Though ye offer up to me burnt-offerings and your meal-offerings, I will take no delight in them." This seems to clearly imply the rejection of all kinds of sacrificial offerings, since both bloody and bloodless sacrifices are comprehended under the terms עֹלֹת (עֹלֹת), and מִנְחָה (מִנְחָה). The former signified the consecration of the offerer, the latter was usually expressive of gratitude. But they were unacceptable to Jahweh, as the verb סָרַף denotes, and so also were their peace-offerings of fatted calves.

The dominant characteristic of the festivals was that of joy and merry-making. The songs which were sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments, and which were a regular feature of the festivals (cf. Ch. 8), were also regarded as gifts to God. Hence their rejection by Jahweh. It was music that lacked a soul, and was, therefore, nothing but a confused and disagreeable sound in the ear of God.

The rejection of the cultus by Amos seems to be complete. The religious festivals with all their sacrificial offerings, and joyful songs and music, are swept aside in the plainest and most forceful of terms. The prophet demands instead, "Let justice roll on as a flood of waters, and righteousness

as a never failing stream." Here again is the positive demand for righteous living.

There is a great variety of opinion as to how V.26 should be translated, whether as a question or as an affirmative statement. If it be taken as a question, then the ⁷ is the interrogative particle; but if it be an affirmative statement it is the definite article. As the definite article it should be repeated with minhah, which it is not. The majority of commentators translate it as an interrogative sentence. "Was it(only)sacrifices and meal-offerings ye brought to me during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?" What is the point of the question? Some think that the emphasis is on 'to me.' Was it to me ye offered sacrifices?" etc. And the answer is 'No!' For even then their worship of Jahweh was insincere and false. Others think that it implies that the cult was not practiced during the wilderness period. No doubt there is an element of truth in both views. There were many lapses on the part of Israel during that period(cf.Ex.32:4-8,19; Jos.24:14; Jud.17:4f; I Sam.19:13; I Kings 12:25-53;), and God was provoked to anger time and again by Israel's waywardness. And it may have been that the sacrificial worship fell into desuetude, at least the rite of circumcision and the celebration of the Passover were in abeyance for a time(cf.Jos.5:5-7; 24:23;). But neither of these views seems to offer a satisfactory explanation of the full force of the prophet's question. (1) The prophets all looked upon the wilderness period as the period in which the religious life of the nation was given its most perfect expression. It was then that Israel enjoyed the gracious favor of God, and in turn they gave Him the devotion and gratitude of their hearts. Such a view does not support the former of the above interpretations. (2) The view that sacrifice fell into disuse because of lack of sacrificial victims is hardly tenable. Up until the time of their entrance into Canaan the Hebrews were a pastoral people and had their flocks. Harper lists eight differ-

ent interpretations of this verse. (1) Idolatrous sacrifices offered to Jahweh. (2) Sacrifice acceptable in form but not continuous because of lack of animals. (3) Required sacrifices but no free-will offerings. (4) Sacrifices to idols but not to Jahweh. (5) Sacrifice accompanied by idol worship. (6) Few sacrifices compared with their many rebellions. (7) No sacrifices at all. (8) Sacrifices to be sure, but also something else, viz., "true worship of the heart, and righteousness, public and private."¹

Such a variety of interpretations is somewhat bewildering, and yet no word of Amos respecting the cultus gives us a more direct clue to his attitude towards it. Of the above theories, the last named, it seems to me, is the most acceptable, for it does justice alike to Amos and to the historical records of the early period. To say that Amos denied that any sacrifices at all were offered is to bring him into conflict with the recorded facts of that period, and to raise questions as to the integrity of the early records. The theory that acknowledges that sacrifices were offered to Jahweh but were vitiated by idol worship is based upon v.26, which is perhaps one of the most difficult and questionable passages in the book of Amos, and of which there has been a variety of interpretations.² Such a charge was often true of Israel, more so in Amos' time than in the desert period; Israel was satisfied with an easy-going syncretism, they bowed down to Jahweh and at the same time they swore by Milcom(Zeph.1:5;).

The prophet Amos leaves us in no doubt at all as to how he regards the cultus as he saw it in operation at the sanctuaries of Israel. His attitude is openly antagonistic. The cultus is an unhallowed thing which Jahweh refuses to acknowledge. It is not a means of grace but an occasion of greater sin. The portals of the sanctuary have become the gates of death; over the cultus there hovers the shadow of death, its sanctuaries are devoted to destruction. If any further evidence were needed of the uncompromising hostility of Amos to the

¹International Critical Commentary, Amos, p.136.

²Harper, ibid, p.137.

cultus of his time, it is found in the conflict with Amaziah, the priest of Bethel (Amos 7:10f;), who felt outraged by the scorn which this uncouth countryman poured out upon their magnificent services of worship, services which he declared to be a snare and a delusion to the people and an abomination to Jahweh. Amaziah was in no doubt as to Amos' attitude to the cult of Bethel. Hence, his peremptory demand that Amos return to Judah and prophesy there. "Amos' speech would convict him at once of blasphemy and high treason, it was a dishonor to God and a menace to the reigning house; and nothing was more natural than at this point the high-priest should intervene."³

2. Hosea And The Cultus.

The prophet Hosea found no more delight in the cultus than did his contemporary, Amos. The judgment of Jahweh must inevitably fall upon the high-places (10:8;). Like Amos, he regarded the sacred festivals as an abomination to God (2:11;). The priests, corrupt and guilty of the vilest sins, were blind leaders of the blind, turning the people aside from the true knowledge and service of God (4:6-9; 5:1; 6:9;). Sacrifices are offered to Jahweh in abundance, but accompanied with the most shameful rites (4:13, 14;), and idolatrous worship (12:11; 13:2;). Such sacrifices are unacceptable to Jahweh.

The passage which is generally regarded as setting forth the attitude of Hosea to the cultus is chapter 6. Ch. 5 contains a pronouncement of doom upon the nation because of its sin. But in v. 15 a statement is made of the results which God expected to follow the disciplining of the nation. Chapter 6:1-3; continues this with an account of the repentance of the people, and of their exhorting one another to return unto Jahweh, and expressing confidence that He will be gracious unto them. Then follows vv. 4-6, in which God expresses His impatience of "a repentance so shallow as also to be futile." It is in this setting that the passage 6:4-6; must be studied.

¹"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?"

³McFadyen: A Cry For Justice, p.98.

Now, such an expostulation addressed to a professedly penitent people indicates that there was a flaw in their penitence. Had their resolutions been true and sincere there could have been no doubt of the hopes expressed being realized. The pleading tone of the divine expostulation evidences Jahweh's ardent desire to restore Israel to His favor. But all the means He had used for the restoration of their love and devotion had been unavailing. What was there more He could do that would accomplish the desired end?

Israel's goodness was of an evanescent nature; "As a morning cloud, and as the early dew that goeth away." It possessed no permanence, it was too soon gone. Israel's piety was short-lived because it was superficial, and that was the besetting sin of Israel. Jahweh had earnestly striven to bring Israel to true repentance. It was for that purpose that He sent unto them the prophets; by the threatenings of His law and the revealing light of His judgments, and by His merciful dealings with them, Jahweh strove to win Israel back in love and devotion to Himself.

It is in v.6 that we come to the prophet Hosea's appraisal of the cultus, and at the best he regards it as of secondary importance. It were too much to affirm that Hosea absolutely rejects the rite of sacrifice. I have shown how Hosea condemned the cult of his time because it was a syncretistic form of worship(see pp.46ff above), which in the main was not to be distinguished from that offered to other gods by their heathen neighbors. But in this passage the prophet complains because Israel's repentance is expressed in terms of sacrificial gifts to Jahweh, i.e., they offer Jahweh something less than His primary requirement. They brought sacrifices and burnt-offerings to Him while that which He required most of all- the love and devotion of their hearts- they gave to another. Therefore, their gifts were unacceptable to Him. "For in piety(or goodness)I delight, and not sacrifice; knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." The rendering, "I desired mercy and not sacrifice,"

does not give the full sense of the Hebrew; "mercy" is too narrow a rendering of the Hebrew *hesedh* (חֶסֶד), which is the Old Testament term for religion; the truly religious men are *anshe hesedh* (אֲנָשֵׁי חֶסֶד, cf. Isa. 57:1;). The second member of the parallelism teaches further, that it is religion that has its root in a practical and experimental knowledge of God (cf. Ch. 2: 20;). That the negative of the first member of the parallelism is to be interpreted in a comparative rather than in an absolute sense, is indicated by the use of the preposition *min* (מִן) in the second member.

As the prophet Hosea looked at the cultus in the light of his ethical conception of God he could give it no approval. "They had said, Come let us return unto Jahweh,----- And Let us know, let us hasten to know Jahweh." And they had come with sacrifices and burnt-offerings, confident that by this means Jahweh could be propitiated. But what value could the propitiatory sacrifices of such a people have for an ethical Being like Jahweh? Their goodness was as transient and as fugitive as a morning cloud. The offering of a burnt-offering, the symbol of consecration to God, was but a hollow sham. In the absence of the spirit of contrition and of true self-surrender to God, which should have motivated their sacrificial offerings to Jahweh, these in themselves were worthless. Thus does Hosea add his voice to that of Amos in his criticism of the cultus.

3. Isaiah And The Cultus.

In Judah the voices of the prophets were raised in condemnation of the cultus. The attitude of Isaiah is unmistakably set forth in chapter 1:10ff; of his book. The chapter opens with a description of the sinful character of the people of Judah (vv. 2-4). The righteous judgment of God has fallen upon the nation because of its sin; the prophet declares that their whole manner of life is ruinous, they have everything to lose and nothing to gain by their mad persistence in sin (vv. 5-9). The people, in order to turn away the wrath of God

and secure His favor again, had evidently thronged the temple, coming laden with gifts and sacrifices to Jahweh. But these the prophet rejects and condemns as useless; nothing would avail with God except amendment of life and conduct(vv. 10-17).

Isaiah, speaking as the representative of Jahweh, asks, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Literally, "What is it to Me?" (^ל ^ל ^ל ^ל the dative of advantage). "What profit is it to Me that you offer Me multitudes of sacrifices? What pleasure can I derive from them?" Jahweh cares nought for the vast number of animals which are slain and offered to Him. "I am sated with burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts." The fatlings were beasts that were reserved and fed in preparation for sacrifice, the fat of which was Jahweh's portion. "And I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." Here are included all the chief sacrificial animals of the Hebrew system. The blood, which is the life, was reserved for God. But it is here positively stated that He has no delight in it. Such a plain statement practically amounts to a rejection of the rite of sacrifice.

In verse 12 the prophet turns to the matter of attendance at the temple services. "When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts?" This may seem to be a strange question, since the law of God required their presence before Him(Ex.23:17; cf. Deut. 16:16;). It is through the forms, the ordinances, and the symbolism of worship that the pious worshipper is enabled to enter into communion with his God. But the prophet's question was not addressed to pious worshippers; it was addressed to a sinful, hypocritical people, who presented gifts to God with hands that reeked with blood. The prophet knows of no law that requires such people as they to trample the courts of Jahweh like a herd of cattle(as the word ^ל ^ל implies)thoughtless and irreverent. Therefore he commands, "Bring no more vain oblations." It is not, "Bring no more offerings," but no more vain, false, hypocritical

offerings. The sacred festivals come in for the same sweeping condemnation, and the impatience of Jahweh with the whole system is expressed in the phrase, "I cannot away with iniquity, even the solemn meeting." As G.A. Smith so aptly puts it: "Isaiah puts their life in an epigram- wickedness and worship; I cannot away, saith the Lord, with wickedness and worship."⁴ And because it was iniquity Jahweh cordially hated the whole thing.

But not only had Jahweh had more than enough of their sacrifices, and grown weary of their "fastings and festal gatherings,"⁵ He was also impatient of their praying. "When ye spread forth your hands," i.e. in prayer seeking the favor of Jahweh(cf.Ex.9:29; 17:11,12; I Kings 8:22;), "I will hide mine eyes from you." God will be blind to all their appeals. "Yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear." Like the prophets of Baal on Carmel, they may cry unceasingly but Jahweh will be unmoved and unheeding, and that because their "hands are full of blood." The expression is a symbol of crime and guilt. God would not listen to the prayers of those upon whose hands lay the stains of sin and guilt, and who were still unrepentant.

Thus, in plain and unambiguous language Isaiah rejected the cultus as he observed it in operation. The externals of Jahweh worship were not neglected; the temple was filled with the smoke of multiplied offerings, and its courts resounded with the shouts of the worshippers. the sabbaths, the monthly festivals, the great festivals, and the solemn rites that concluded them, were diligently celebrated. Nothing was lacking but the presence of Jahweh, and His absence nullified the whole thing.

4. The Prophet Micah And The Cultus

The prophet Micah looked with disapproval upon the cultus of Samaria and Jerusalem(1:5;); the prayers of Israel will not avail with Jahweh to avert the threatened judgment upon the nation; heathen divination and idolatry he condemns(5:12ff;). The classic passage in which the attitude of Micah to the

⁴The Book of Isaiah, p.6

⁵Skinner: Isaiah, ad loc.

cultus is set forth in chapter 6:6-8;

In the opening verses of chap. 6 Jahweh is represented as appealing to His goodness as giving Him first claim upon the devotion of Israel. "Remember now," is an appeal to conscience, to their sense of gratitude, love and devotion. Because He had been just and fair in His dealings with them, surely they should have been just and fair with Him!

The appeal of the prophet awakens a response in the hearts of the people. They have been worshipping Jahweh with a great show of zeal, and they felt that their God must be well pleased with the multitude of gifts which they brought to Him. But the words of the prophet have raised a question in their minds. Can it be possible that they have been lacking in generosity to Jahweh. And so, they ask, "With what shall I come before Jahweh?" It has been suggested that this and the questions which follow are the questions of an awakened conscience which has come to realize that none of the things enumerated will be acceptable to God. It is an attractive suggestion. But interpreting it, as I do, in connection with the prophet's appeal in the preceding verses, I take it to mean that the people were anxious to propitiate their God and enjoy His favor. They offer no defense against the charges brought by the prophet, for they are neither to be denied nor justified. The manner in which they conceive of Jahweh's favor being won has little to distinguish it from the conceptions of the heathen. The questions are so framed by the prophet that they (1) express the common conceptions of the people, and (2) suggest the folly of such conceptions, and thus lead up to a definition of true religion in v.8.

Jahweh is a great King into whose presence His subjects may not come empty-handed. It was so required in the law (cf. Ex. 23:15; 34:20;). But the principle underlying the requirement was not based upon "an essentially commercial view of the relation between Jahweh and His worshippers,"⁶ though it came to be so regarded in the popular thought.

⁶J.M. Powis Smith: International Critical Commentary; Micah, p.125.

The willingness of the people to give Jahweh the most precious gifts and in the greatest abundance- yearling calves, thousands of rams, tens of thousands of rivers of oil, and, most precious gift of all, their own children- is thus described in the form of interrogation. But the questions are so framed that only a negative answer can be given. "Nay, none of these, however^e precious or generous, can avail to propitiate Jahweh." And so, at the mouth of another prophet, the thought that sacrifice is all that Jahweh desires is repudiated.

5. The Prophet Jeremiah And The Cultus.

Jeremiah, the last of the pre-exilic prophets, paints a dark picture of the social, ethical, and religious conditions in Judah, and especially in Jerusalem, where the divine presence was supposed to dwell. No passage, perhaps, in the writings of Jeremiah reveals more clearly to what depths of moral and religious degradation the people of Judah had sunk than chapter 7. It is in this passage that the attitude of Jeremiah to the cultus is plainly stated. The record of Jeremiah's address delivered at one of the temple gates, probably on the occasion of one of the great feasts, has been preserved in two forms, one in chapter 7, and the other in chapter 26. The former contains a fuller account of the prophet's words on that occasion, while the latter states the purpose of the address and describes its effects upon his hearers. The date assigned to this utterance of the prophet, the fourth year of Jehoiakim, is no doubt correct.

The prophetic oracle of chapter 7 is directed, (1) against the temple itself, the center of the cult of Judah, and (2) against the sacrificial system carried on in the temple. Jeremiah's attitude towards the cultus differs little from that of his predecessors, all of whom inveighed against both the sanctuary and the sacrifices(cf. Amos 5:5, 21ff; Hosea 4:15ff; 12:11; Isa. 1:11ff; Micah 3:12; 6:6-8;). But what Jeremiah says about the cultus is all the more

significant, since it was spoken in the period subsequent to the great reform of B.C.621, by which the high-places with their idolatrous worship had been outlawed, and the temple at Jerusalem made the only legitimate sanctuary in Judah. Hither the people came from every part of the land to worship Jahweh.

It is quite evident from what Jeremiah says about the moral conditions in Judah that the reformation had not deeply touched the ethical life of the nation. On the other hand, it is evident that there had been no lessening of zeal in the performance of the externals of religion. The centralization of worship, designed to correct one evil had given rise to another evil. The people instead of placing their confidence in Jahweh put a false trust in the place wherein He was supposed to dwell. It was a superstitious confidence; it was believed that the very repetition of the phrase, "the temple of Jahweh, the temple of Jahweh, the temple of Jahweh are these," was sufficient to guarantee their security against all peril. It was the popular belief that Jerusalem was inviolable because of the presence of the temple in it. Was it not the abode of Jahweh? Therefore He would defend it against the desecration of the heathen, and thus the safety of the city and its people was assured. And all of this regardless of any question of moral character. With such confidence the people were at ease in Zion(cf.Micah 3:11;). "Lying words," cries Jeremiah. Jahweh will destroy this place in whose sanctity you trust for deliverance, and then what protection will the land and its people have? If they had any doubt about this, let them "go now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the beginning, and see what I did to it on account of the wickedness of my people Israel.-----Therefore will I do to the house which is called by my name, wherein ye trust,-----as I did to Shiloh."

Turning his attention from the temple to the sacrificial system, Jeremiah declares that so far as Jahweh is concerned all of their sacrifices are worth-

less. "Add your burnt-offerings('oloth, which were wholly devoted to God) to your sacrifices(zebhaḥim, the greater part of which were eaten at the sacrificial meals by those who brought them) and eat flesh." Eat all the sacrifices yourselves; deny yourself nothing on my account. I am not at all concerned about your sacrifices; they will not alter my righteous purpose, therefore, you may as well eat them all. It was thus that Jeremiah sought to dispel the false notion that God's claims are satisfied by a merely formal service. It never was so, and it never shall be so. "For I spake not unto your fathers nor commanded them about burnt-offerings or sacrifices. But this word I commanded them; Listen to my voice, and I will be your God and ye shall be my people; walk in the way which I command you that ye may prosper." These words of the prophet have been variously interpreted. Taken literally, they appear to deny absolutely that Jahweh had given any injunction to Moses concerning sacrifice. But whatever their true interpretation be, whether the prophet's rejection of sacrifice was absolute or relative, and with that I shall deal later, they leave us in no doubt as to Jeremiah's attitude to the cultus, which was one of strong hostility. But this hostility, like that of his predecessors, cannot be understood apart from his conception of the ethical character of Jahweh and of what constitutes the primary and essential thing in His service.

The attitude of the pre-exilic prophets to the cultus of Israel was openly and actively antagonistic. Elaborate as was the ritual; observed though it was with a zeal that was commendable but mistaken; and though in it all the people were actuated by loyalty to Jahweh, the prophets nevertheless have nothing but scorn and contempt for the cultus as they saw it in operation at the sanctuaries of Israel. "This is the kind of thing ye like, ye children of Israel," cries Amos(4:5;). "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me?" asks Isaiah(1:11;). It is not the kind of thing that is acceptable to Jahweh.

The people have formed their own standards of worship; they worship Jahweh in a manner which they assume must be acceptable to Him. But the prophets communicate the thoughts of Jahweh Himself concerning it. "I hate, I despise your fast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though you offer me your burnt-offerings and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols"(Amos 5:21f;). And Hosea adds his voice, declaring; "As for the sacrifice of mine offerings(sacrificial gifts), they sacrifice flesh and eat it, but Jahweh accepteth them not"(8:13; cf.6:6;). The whole thing, the prophets declared, was displeasing to Jahweh; He was sated with their offerings, their festivals bored Him, and it was all a vain and worthless show(Isa.1:11f; Micah 6:6; Jer.7:21ff;). Not only was their worship of Jahweh unacceptable, but their very zeal in performing it was declared to be an aggravation of their sin(Amos 4:4,5; Hosea 4:13,14; Isa.1:13; Micah 1:5;). The only end which the multitude of their sacrifices and tithes served was to fill up the measure of their guilt. The great centers of the cultus would be destroyed(Amos 3:14; Micah 1:5; Jer.7:11;), together with the worship which had become a snare to Israel rather than a means of grace.

Was the prophets' rejection of the cultus absolute? To find the answer to this question I now turn to the interpretation of the attitude of the pre-exilic prophets to the cultus.

CHAPTER VII.
INTERPRETATION OF THE PROPHETS' ATTITUDE
TO THE CULTUS
(Absolute Rejection)

The mission of the prophets was to speak words of spiritual guidance, counsel, and instruction to Israel; to reveal the will of God and guide Israel along the way of holiness until it should become a holy people, even as Jahweh their God was holy. In the fulfilment of their mission "they fertilised the religious life of the nation with new thoughts, or nourished the seeds of truth and the higher aspirations already planted into fuller growth and fruitfulness"¹ Their attitude towards the cultus must be interpreted in the light of their mission. It is obvious from the prophets' statements respecting it that the cultus was hindering rather than furthering the divine ideal for Israel. And because it stood in the way of the nation's ethical and spiritual development, the prophets with one accord condemned it in no uncertain language.

That the prophets rejected the cultus is generally agreed, but there is a difference of opinion as to whether their rejection of it was absolute or relative, per se or opus operatum. Some of the theories advanced suffer through failure to take account of all that the prophet has to say about the cultus, or from a tendency to read too much into his utterances respecting it.

A theory of interpretation which is widely held is, that the prophet far from demanding a purified cultus rejected it absolutely, demanding its abolition as a thing which in itself was productive only of evil, and as something foreign to the simple Jahweh religion of the desert. This interpretation is based upon a critical theory of the origin and authorship of the law of Israel, and not upon a correct exegesis of what the prophets say about the cult and why they say it, and that is its weakness. The whole question of the law of Israel is a very complex one. But so far as the question of authorship

¹A.B. Davidson: Old Testament Prophecy, p. 17.

is concerned, the presuppositions are all in favor of regarding Moses as the original founder of Israel's legal system. The great reform of Josiah's reign (B.C.621) was carried out on the basis of an authoritative code of law for which Mosaic origin and divine sanction was claimed. And while Jeremiah may have felt disappointed over the results of the reformation, there is no indication that he protested [^]the claim of divine authority for the Book of the Law. *against* Indeed, some scholars think that there is evidence in the book of Jeremiah that the prophet made a preaching tour of Judah to enforce its teachings upon the people.² As an explanation of the attitude of the prophets to the cultus this interpretation is far from being satisfactory. The legitimacy or the illegitimacy of the cultus, so far as the prophets were concerned, did not turn on a critical question as to whether it had the sanction of divinely revealed law.

When it is affirmed that the prophets in their condemnation of the cultus clearly reveal their ignorance of any divinely sanctioned ritual which had been given through Moses, one of two things must be believed; either those who make such an affirmation are mistaken, or the prophets themselves were mistaken. I cannot believe that the latter is true. The prophets were students of religion, they were conversant with the practices and beliefs of primitive religion. And they knew all that the primitive J E documents had to tell them about the early religion of Israel. And Jeremiah, whose rejection of the cult is said to be so absolute, knew all that the book of Deuteronomy prescribed in respect to the ritual of worship, and for which divine authority was claimed. Never for a moment did the prophets question the fact that Moses was the founder of Israel's religion. But it is denied that ritual requirements formed any part of the religion which Moses gave to Israel at Sinai. It is affirmed that they did not merely condemn the corruption of a pure law of worship, but completely rejected the whole system of worship as a thing destitute

²Hastings Dictionary Of The Bible, vol.II, p.570a.

of divine sanction.

Now the general implication of this clearly is, that the religion of Israel was from the beginning a purely spiritual religion, in which no provision was made for the worship of God through the symbolism of external forms; there was no temple therein; there were no priests in sacred vestments officiating before the altar upon which they offered sacrifices to God. In other words, Hebrew religion at the beginning approximated the ideal which Jesus declared to be still in the future- a worship of God in spirit and in truth, not dependent upon temples, priests, or sacred symbols. Such a view is not supported by either the analogy of primitive religions or Hebrew tradition.

a/ In primitive religions the rite of sacrifice seems to be inseparable from the worship of the deity. And the early narratives show that Israel was no different in this respect from other peoples. If either Amos or Jeremiah meant to affirm that no sacrifices were offered to God during the wilderness period, then they were assuming a state of affairs in religious practice that was contrary to what was customary among primitive peoples, and especially among the Semites, who were wont to regard the common meal as a domestic sacrifice. If Israel for a period of forty years offered no sacrifices whatever, observed no ritual of worship, then it means that from the time they left Egypt until they entered Canaan they made a complete break with the traditional religious customs of the Semitic race. Is it credible? I think not. It is difficult to believe that a number of loosely organized tribes who but yesterday were slaves, should attain overnight to a purely spiritual service of Jahweh. In saying this I neither forget nor minimize the spiritual vision of Moses which enabled him to break with the natural religion of the Semitic world. But it is contrary to the idea of a progressive revelation of truth to mankind as they were able to receive it. It is like looking for the full corn in the ear where

there is as yet but the green blade. Moses may have been able to conceive of a worship of Jahweh from which all ritual and external ordinances were banished. But he was religious genius enough to know that the Israel which he led out of Egypt was far from ready for so ideal a form of worship. Jesus once spoke of Moses sanctioning certain things because of the people's hardness of heart.

I cannot conceive of the prophets, even with all their profound spiritual and ethical insight, conceiving of a national religion completely divorced from sanctuary, sacrifice, and service of worship. For "so far from regarding sacrifice as not well-pleasing to Jahweh, when the right spirit was present, there is not one of the greater prophets who does not include sacrifice in his own picture of the restored and perfected theocracy(cf. Isa.56:6,7; 60:7; 66:23; Jer.17:24-27; 33:17-26; Ezek.ch.40ff;). It is to be remembered that it is not sacrifice alone, but prayer, feast-days, sabbaths, etc. that the prophets include in their denunciations; yet we know the importance they attached to prayer and the sabbath in other parts of their writings(cf. Jer.17:21-27; "As I commanded your fathers" v.22. Isa.58:13,14;)." ³

Dr. A.C.Welch points out that the attitude of Amos differs according as he addresses himself to this group or that group. In ch.8 he addressed those "who were at ease in Israel." The prophet saw that this type of person "rebel-ling against the cultus because it formed a restraint upon his appetite-----
-----In speaking to such men the prophet did not stop to inquire into the origin of the sabbath and new moon, or inquire as to their legitimacy in the religious life of Israel. In ch.5 the question of the origin and worth of sacrifices are in a very different case. He addresses those who desire the Day of the Lord. They are conscious that their relation to Jahweh is unsatisfact-ory, they are, therefore, not at ease. They eagerly offer sacrifices to pro-

³Orr: Problem Of The Old Testament, p.157.

pitiate their God and show their devotion to Him."⁴ Even the critics of the Wellhausen brand grant the antiquity of the cultus of Israel, and the impossibility of a worship completely separated from all external forms.⁵ It is much easier to believe, and much more likely in the nature of things, that Israel offered its worship to Jahweh through the media of external forms, and that Moses formulated a set of ritual laws for its regulation, than to accept the alternative of a religion so spiritual that ritual had no place in it.

Is there to be found in the traditions of ancient Israel or in the reflections of the prophetic historians any consciousness of such an ideal worship as that implied in a literal reading of Amos or Jeremiah or any of the prophets? In the discussion above of the antiquity of the cultus of Israel, I have pointed out that, according to the prophetic historians, the altar had a central place in the religion of the patriarchs. And when we turn to their narrative of Moses and the wilderness period, we find that the cult is still to the forefront. That which the analogies of primitive religion make probable the traditions of early Israel confirm.

In Hebrew tradition, Moses is regarded as the father of all of Israel's legislation, both civil and religious. There must have been some basis of fact for this tradition; unquestionably a body of laws which became the nucleus of all later legislation among the Hebrews came originally from Moses. "That Moses left no impress upon the forms of the religious life of his people is difficult to believe. It may well be supposed that he stands for an early stage in the evolution of the institution which culminated in the Priestly Code. It is, therefore, desirable to base the account of ancient Hebrew sacrifice on another group of sources. Foremost among these is J E. whose patriarchal narratives illustrate a comparatively early cycle of ideas, and the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 20:24-23:19;) which chronicles or corrects certain features

⁴ Religion Of Israel Under The Kingdom, pp. 86, 87.

⁵ Orr: Problem Of The Old Testament, pp. 158, 159.

of ritual practices down to the eighth century."⁶

In view of the requirements of the primitive codes, which I have examined in a previous chapter, and especially of the J code (Ex. 34:12-26;) or Decalogue (which according to some scholars originally stood after ch. 19, thus bringing it into connection with the Book of the Covenant, the oldest section of Hebrew legislation), the statement of Marti that, "The chief mark of the nomad religion and that in Canaan is the cultus. In one case it was almost entirely absent. Jahweh demanded no sacrifices. In the other there is a very elaborate cult, sacrifices are zealously offered, great festivals are observed, there are many sanctuaries,"⁷ would seem to require some modification. The difference was not the absence of a cult in one period and the presence of it in another. The difference lay rather in the simplicity of the cult of Mosaism and the highly elaborate cult which Amos saw in operation at Bethel. This point need not be dwelt upon, since the contrast between the cult of the wilderness and that of the eighth century has already been discussed in another connection (see chs. IV and V above). What I am concerned to show is, that not only was there a cultus in the wilderness, but that it had Mosaic sanction, and the authority for this belief is in the traditions of old Israel.⁸ The contents of the primitive J code, Kent affirms, support the conclusion that the majority of them came from the time of Moses.⁹ "The further evidence of their being the cornerstone of Israelitish legislation is confirmed by their character. They define religion in terms of the ritual; they come, therefore, from a period long antedating Amos and Isaiah, both of whom defined religion in terms of life and love and service. In common with the utterances of all early religions these primitive commands emphasize simply the cultus." In view of the witness of the early traditions of Israel to the existence of a primitive ritual code which originated with Moses, I cannot accept the conclusion that the

⁷The Religion Of The Old Testament, p.23

⁸Cf. Kent: Israel's Laws And Legal Precedents, p.23.

⁹Ibid, p.16.

⁶Paterson: Hastings Dictionary of The Bible, vol.IV, p.333.

~~conclusion~~ that the prophets denied the cultic practices of the wilderness period, and therefore demanded the abolition of the whole system of ritual as a thing foreign to Jahweh religion.

If Amos meant to deny the fact of sacrifice in the wilderness, then he denied the veracity of the historical record of that period, and thus brought himself into conflict with the prophetic historians. There is nothing in the J E narratives that would lend support to the belief that the immediate predecessors of Amos looked upon ritual as alien to true religion. The acceptability of the worshipper's offering to Jahweh is determined by the disposition of his heart. "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" (Gen. 4:7;). And, "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (I Sam. 15:22;). It is nowhere suggested by J E that Israel's relation to Jahweh had its sanction in any sacrificial system. And this, I believe, is the point of Amos' question regarding sacrifices in the wilderness. The ethical spirit of the prophetic writers is evident throughout their narrative. And in the Book of the covenant morality and worship are joined together. There are great moral principles as well as moral requirements involved in the worship of Jahweh; duties and obligations to one's fellows as well as to one's God. But the ritual requirements are reduced to the minimum of simplicity. These men sought to lead the people to the higher conception of Jahweh as an ethical Being. Nevertheless, they accepted, and embodied in their narrative, the ritual requirements which tradition declared had originated with Moses, and which, therefore, were regarded as possessing divine sanction.

Dr. George Adam Smith finds in the Book of the Covenant the sanctions for the ethics of Amos. But he affirms that Amos positively condemned the ritual of Israel.¹⁰ And Kautzsch says, "When the prophets repudiate an external cultus, they are not merely demanding a purified God-pleasing cultus." And again, "No

¹⁰ Cf. The Book Of The Twelve Prophets; Amos, pp. 102-106.

one has any right to depreciate the merit which belongs to the prophets of having discovered the ideal of true service of God in the worship of Him in spirit and in truth without any outward ceremonies and performances.¹¹ These writers assume that Amos did not fully accept the conceptions of J E, that he and his successors took their ethical conceptions from the Book of the Covenant, but rejected all that reference to ritual. In other words, that which the J E writers put together the prophets put asunder. And in doing this the prophets earned for themselves the distinction of having discovered the ideal of the true worship of Jahweh in spirit and in truth.

The assertion that "the prophets were not innovators" has been made so often that it has become axiomatic. They were reformers. They sought to call the nation back to the primitive simplicity of its early religion. And if doubt lingers as to the need of reform in the worship of Jahweh, a comparison of the cultus of the primitive sources with that of the eighth century in Canaan will at once dispel it. It is the glory of the prophets that they made explicit that which was implicit in the early religion of Israel. They emphasized the fact that the one thing that differentiates Jahweh religion from all other religions is that it involves a moral claim, in that Jahweh is an ethical Being, a God of righteousness who demands in His worshipper corresponding moral worth. The predecessors of Amos may have regarded a simplified cult as having its place, and to a certain extent subserving spiritual ends, in Jahweh religion; and the fact that they incorporated two primitive ritual codes in their narrative tends to strengthen such a belief. The cultus afforded the people a means of expressing their gratitude to God in concrete form, as well as enforcing Jahweh's claims upon both them and their substance. But in itself the cult was impotent to effectively express the moral character of God, or to move Him favorably in their behalf. The emphasis was placed upon the moral worth and the disposition of the heart of the worshipper; these and these alone,

¹¹Hastings Dictionary Bible, vol.V, p.685

determined the value of his gifts to God. This is the great principle taught in the matchless story of Cain and Abel by the J writer long before Amos hurled his denunciation at the cultus of Bethel. And in this he was not conscious of any departure from the spirit and teachings of the first great prophet of Israel, whose sanction was claimed for all the laws which were incorporated in the early narratives.

I do not believe, then, that the prophets, in face of the analogies of primitive religion, of the traditions of their own nation, and of the belief of their immediate predecessors who compiled those traditions, meant to deny that the cultus had any place in the religion of the wilderness period or that sacrifice was offered at any time during that period.

CHAPTER VIII
INTERPRETATION OF THE PROPHETS' ATTITUDE
TO THE CULTUS- Contd.
(Rejection Of All Heathen Elements)

The cult of the eighth century and later was not the simple, pure cult of Mosaiism. Long contact with the nature cults of Canaan had so influenced it, that, while Jahweh was still the object of Israel's worship, the worship offered to Him was heathen both in motive and in character.

1. It was heathen in motive. Just as the Canaanites presented their offerings as gifts to Baal, so Israel offered sacrifices to Jahweh in order to secure the favor of Him who had it in His power to give them so much.

There are several theories as to what was the original idea lying back of sacrifice. The most satisfactory theory is that which regards sacrifice as a gift to the Deity. Whether or not it was the original idea connected with sacrifice at the beginning, there can be no doubt that in the Old Testament the prevailing idea associated with sacrifice was, that it was a gift to God; a gift which was at the same time an act of worship, serving as a medium through which the varying religious moods and emotions of the worshipper could be expressed. Dr. Gray, while acknowledging that "the presentation of gifts to God was an important element in Hebrew thought, " does not go so far as to say that "all sacrifices ever came to be treated as nothing but gifts."¹ I do not take exception to this statement. Other ideas may have been associated with sacrifice, and later differentiations of it made. Sacrifice in Israel was a very complex thing. Nevertheless, it was as a gift to God that it was mainly regarded, this was the idea common to all the sacrificial offerings. The gift was the worshipper's acknowledgement of Jahweh and a confession of his dependence upon Him(cf.Gen.31:53;). One should never fail to offer some acknowledgement of the Deity whom one invokes(Ex.23:15;). The gifts of the firstfruits of the land and of the firstlings of the flock were an acknowledgement that the offer-

¹Sacrifice In The Old Testament, p.3f

↳ Or was indebted to Jahweh for the increase.

Thus, the sacrificial offerings presented as gifts could be made to serve worthy ends in the religious life of the Hebrew people. But the prophets saw something that vitiated the gift and rendered it unacceptable to God. Consequently they all criticized the sacrificial system. Dr. Gray offers what seems to be the reason for this criticism. "one point common to most of them," he says, is that the gifts are a means of gratification to those that offer them and not to Jahweh, i.e., in as far as they are regarded as gifts they are declared by the prophets to be more agreeable to the givers than to the recipient, though by no means in the sense that it was in this case more blessed to give than to receive."² The prophets saw no sign of any consciousness of sin in the life of the people, nothing but self-satisfaction with their own religiosity, for they were in all things very religious. But in their thought the religious life consisted in the punctilious observance of the externals of divine worship; the ethical side was in the background, the external received the emphasis.

Isaiah and Micah, Dr. Gray declares, show with all clearness that the prophets are really criticising a system which was regarded by those who put their trust in it as a system, not of establishing communion with God, but of making gifts to Jahweh in order to secure His favor. To bring gifts is a vain oblation. You think, Isaiah says in effect, Jahweh requires you to come before Him with hands full of presents for Him. He does nothing of the kind. In Micah the point of view which regards sacrifices as gifts dominates the whole reference to sacrifices.-----To the prophets, then, the people seemed to act on the theory that what God wanted was more and costlier gifts, heavier payments; and that the suitable gifts to Him were slain animals; and that in the extremity of their perplexity they could even think of giving Him the bodies of their own children. Such a theory of gifts the prophets repudiated.³

²Sacrifice In The Old Testament, p.41.

³Ibid, p. 41ff.

Amos declared that such a conception of sacrifice was unknown in Israel in pre-Canaanitish days. "Was it only sacrifices and meal-offerings you brought to me forty years in the desert, O house of Israel?" Sacrifices, yes, but something more, the true worship of your hearts. In those days when Jahweh made bare His arm in their behalf, when He chose them from among all the nations of the earth to be the agent of His holy purpose, He was not moved to do so because of either the quantity or the quality of their gifts to Him. The abundance of His grace was not dependent upon the plenitude of their gifts. But in Amos' day the people thought to buy the favor of God with their lavish gifts, as if He were an unwilling despot who needed to be constantly propitiated. And secure in the conviction that their power and prosperity was the result of and in proportion to the splendor and elaborateness of their ritual they dwelt in smug complacency, undisturbed by the evils that were gnawing at the foundations of their national life.

2. The cultus of Israel in Canaan had become heathen in character. The charge that Hosea makes against Israel is, that she has committed conjugal infidelity, spiritual harlotry; Israel had "played the harlot." She had said, "I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink"(2:5;). Israel's lovers were the Baalim, the gods of fertility. And in order to secure their favor she gave them her adoration; the fruits of the land were the hire that her lovers had given her(2:12;). But in the better day to come Israel would call Jahweh "Ishi," and no more call Him "Baali."

Licentious rites were the accompaniment of worship at the high-places(Hos.4:13,14;), and images had a prominent place in the worship(Hos.4:12;). Well, therefore, did Hosea name the local sanctuaries "Bamoth-aven," high-places of iniquity(10:8;), for there the most abominable things were done in the name of religion. Even Bethel- "House of God"- had become Beth-aven, "House of Iniquity"(Hos.4:15;). And little wonder Amos regarded the worship there as but a multi-

plication of guilt, as he urged the people to seek it not, but rather to seek good and not evil. Jahweh was worshipped under the image of a bull, and the unholy emblems of Baalism stood beside His altar.

It was not because there was no Mosaic law by which the cultus could be sanctioned that the prophets condemned it. Nevertheless they were correct in affirming that the cultus of the eighth and seventh centuries had no place in Jahweh religion, much less divine sanction. As for the sanction of the law, there is no ritual law in the whole of the Old Testament by which the cult of the prophetic period could be sanctioned; it was at variance with all the codes of the Old Testament, both early and late. It was an unholy thing; it was a bigamous union of Jahweh worship with the sensual, degrading nature worship of Canaan, compared with which, the union of morality and ritual in Mosaism, which so shocks the sensitive souls of some of the critics, is an ideal union. The prophets saw something in the cultus of Israel that was alien to the wilderness religion. But that something was not "mere ritual," it was heathen ritual, in which images, sacred prostitution, sexual license, and revelry figured; a ritual in which there was nothing to distinguish Jahweh, in whose honor it was performed, from Chemosh or Milcom or any of the gods of their heathen neighbors. In rejecting the worship offered to Jahweh the prophets did not do so because, in their view, ritual had never had a place in the religion of Israel. They rejected it because it had become so intermixed with heathen elements, and so completely divorced from spiritual and ethical requirement, that the prophets could declare it to be contrary to the divine will and to the primitive religious practices of Israel.

Now, this is far from saying that Israel during the wilderness period had no ritual of any kind. Amos rather implied a contrast between the worship of the early period and that which he witnessed at Bethel. The two stood in much the same relation as the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the upper room

in Jerusalem and the Mass of the Roman Catholic church to-day. It has been said that if a Christian of the third century were to see the Catholic church of to-day he would not be able to recognize in it the Christian church of his time. It was something like this that Amos was saying or meant to convey to the worshippers at Bethel. The apostle Paul denounced a similar attempt to combine the incompatible in the church at Corinth(cf.I Cor.10:21f;). He asked the Corinthian Christians just what the prophets had in effect asked Israel: "What have righteousness and unrighteousness in common, or how can light associate with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and Belial, or what business has a believer with an unbeliever? What compact can there be between God's temple and idols?"(II Cor.6:15f;). Both prophet and apostle declared that there could be no fellowship between these, and that God demanded the separation of His people from the heathen world.

3. Ritual had become an end in itself. Religion found its highest expression in the rites and ceremonies of the cultus. But these the prophets declared to be unimportant compared with morality; religion was something more than mere ritual. "Over against the theory that God's favor was to be obtained by multiplying and magnifying sacrificial gifts we may say, indeed, that the prophets held forth the truth that God's favor is found by man becoming like Himself, just and merciful."⁴ According to the teaching of the prophets sacrifice was only of secondary importance, because salvation was conditioned by ethical considerations. God's first demand was for repentance and righteous living; without these their worship was an abomination unto Him. "The only proof that a truly religious man can give of his religion is a consistent moral life."⁵

It is a significant fact that none of the prophets ever criticised the cult without at the same time condemning the sins of the worshippers; the prophets

⁴Gray: Sacrifice In The Old Testament, p.44

⁵Marti: Religion Of The Old Testament, p.147.

always went beyond the ritual to the worshipper and his moral shortcomings, and these are regarded as the result of a certain state of heart and will.

Amos, in warning the people away from the idolatrous shrines at Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba, called upon them to revise their sense of values; put first things first; restore God to the place in their lives which they had permitted the sanctuary at Bethel to usurp. Spiritual favors are not to be bought with material gifts. Turn, then, from all of this empty, meaningless, hypocritical ceremonial to Jahweh the true source of life and light, "Lest He break through like fire on the house of Joseph and there be none to quench it for Bethel." Repentance alone can save Israel from the consuming fire of God's wrath. "Seek good and not evil," Establish justice in the gate," were the demands of God upon Israel. Fellowship with God through rites and ceremonies can never be made a substitute for fellowship with one's fellow-men. Nor can fellowship with the divine become a reality until a man's obligations to his fellows have been recognized and an earnest attempt made to discharge them. This explains why God was not in the feasts at Bethel and Gilgal. He could have no fellowship with those who violated all the laws of human friendship. The positive neglect of the duties of human fellowship and the violation of the fundamental laws of humanity make fellowship with God very difficult, if, indeed, not altogether impossible. In this connection it is well for us to remember that a greater than Amos taught that he ^{who} would enjoy fellowship with God must first remove that which hinders fellowship between him and his own brother. "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift." (Matt. 5:24;). That which called forth Jesus' severest condemnation was the religion of the Pharisees and the Sadducees with all of

its ornate and elaborate ritual, its ostentation and punctiliousness so far as external performances were concerned, but which, to the all-seeing eye of the Prophet of Galilee, was marked by hypocrisy, oppression, hatred, and bitterness. And Jesus denounced these devotees of externalism as "whited sepulchres," "serpents," and "vipers."

Hosea, like Amos, sought to restore the ethical to its prime place in the religion of Israel. "For in goodness(וּבְחֵן)I delight, and not sacrifice; knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings."(6:6;). Here Hosea reiterates what the prophet Samuel long before had declared. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Obedience is better than sacrifice, that is, better than such sacrifice as is divorced from obedience. And what value has the fat of rams for Jahweh if those who offer it give no heed to His ethical demands upon them? Thus did Hosea, who in other passages condemned the debasing and immoral rites associated with the cultus(4:13,14; 8:4-6; 13:2;), declare that even the rites and ceremonies which in themselves were not objectionable had no value before God when offered as a substitute for righteousness.

The attitude of the great prophet of Judah is clearly expressed in chapter I of his book. Isaiah, like the prophets of the N. Kingdom, is mainly concerned with the moral shortcomings of his people. He accuses them of infidelity, ingratitude, and moral corruption; they are a sinning nation, a race of evil-doers, whose presence desecrates the courts of God's house and whose festivals are a weariness to Him. Why? Because their worship is offered as a substitute for that which alone can restore them to the favor and fellowship of God, namely, amendment of life and conduct. The cult in itself is not condemned, but the hypocritical use to which it is put is condemned. The ritual of worship had degenerated into an unspiritual formalism; it had become a substitute for rather than an aid to true religious devotion. It did not occur to these wor-

shippers that their offerings and prayers were futile unless their daily conduct was right and compassionate. They were unable to see, as the prophet saw, that neither they nor their gifts could find acceptance with God until they approached Him with humble hearts, clean hands, and obedient wills. They must cease to do evil and learn to do well. Until then, let them bring no more vain oblations.

Micah, the contemporary of Isaiah, swept aside the false notion that all that Jahweh desired or cared for was a multiplication of sacrifices(6:6-8;). Dr. G.A.Smith in his interpretation of this passage credits Israel with having "at last come to feel the vanity of the exaggerated zeal with which Amos pictures then exceeding the legal requirements of sacrifice; and with a despair sufficiently evident in the superlatives which they use, they confess the futility and weariness of the whole system, even in the most lavish and impossible forms of sacrifice."⁶ If this interpretation be correct, then it means that Israel had at last embraced that more spiritual religion which the prophets had advocated. But there is no evidence that such was the case before the exile. So far from being a confession of the futility of sacrifice, I interpret it as an expression of the people's readiness to multiply their offerings, intensify their ritualistic worship, and bring to Jahweh whatever He might require in the way of gifts, however costly, even to human sacrifice. Surely nothing demonstrates to what an extent religion had come to be regarded as mere ritual, or so clearly reveals the ignorance of the people as to the spiritual and ethical requirements of Jahweh.

The prophet makes it clear that God will not be propitiated with their material gifts, for "the gift without the giver is bare." Micah did not think of Jahweh as displeased with sacrifice in itself. "He would merely repudiate the thought that sacrifice is all that Jahweh requires."⁷ "What does Jahweh seek from thee O man?" asks Micah. And the active participle of the verb(וַיִּשְׁמַע)

⁶Book Of The Twelve Prophets: Micah, p.424.

⁷J.M.Powis Smith: International Critical Commentary; Micah, p. 126.

denotes that it is what God seeks continuously from men, there is no abatement in His demands. "Do justly." Treat your fellow-men with strict equity in all your dealings with them, not seeking personal aggrandizement at the cost of another's rights. "Love kindness." Let there be a loving of kindness, a delighting in performing acts of kindness to others. "Walk humbly with thy God" Humbly submitting to God to live in conformity with His holy will, and in intimate fellowship with Him. This last precept is first in order of precedence, it is in order to the first named two. True morality must always have a religious basis and sanction. And true religion always expresses itself in a high morality. He who walks humbly with his God will walk considerately of the rights and needs of his fellow-men. These constitute God's prime demands upon man. In these consists true religion, practical religion. They are few, but they go to the very springs of action, they are woven into the warp and woof of the character of every true servant of God. Micah, therefore, sought to shift the centre of religion from the cultus to the ethical life. And in doing this he took his stand with the other great prophets of his age.

Dr. A.C. Welch, discussing Jer. 7:21f; affirms that Jeremiah "did not accuse the people and the priesthood of having laid undue emphasis on the cult in comparison with the weightier matters of the law, or of having, in exaggerated devotion to ritual, neglected justice and the love of God. He denied the existence in Judah of any ceremonial laws which had the right to lay claim to the authority of Moses."⁸ Like Dr. Welch, I do not wish to "complicate the question by asking whether the prophet was correct in his representation of the original character of the Mosaic revelation." That I have already discussed above. Nevertheless, it seems to me that there is not sufficient justification for Dr. Welch's interpretation of this passage. The prophet could not have been ignorant of the existence of the J, E, and D codes, in which

⁸Jeremiah: p. 143.

provision was made for the ritual of worship, and for which Mosaic authority was claimed. If we shut ourselves up to a literal interpretation of the passage(7:21f;), it implies that in the mind of Jeremiah the only thing that invalidated the cultus was the non-existence of any ceremonial law which had the right to lay claim to Mosaic authority. Did the prophet judge of the right or wrong of anything merely in terms of external laws. Israel had entered into covenant relation with Jahweh at Sinai, but he declared that that relation no longer existed. Not because there was no law to guarantee it, but because it was an ethical relationship involving ethical obligations. Therefore, that which guaranteed the covenant relation was not the existence of any law but the faithful and ready fulfilment of the ethical conditions of the covenant. It was the ethical requirements of Jahweh which Jeremiah, like his predecessors, regarded as the primary and essential elements of the covenant made at Sinai. He denounced idolatry, the worship of strange gods, and the heathen symbols and practices which had been introduced into the worship of Jahweh, as violations of the terms of the covenant. And he, true to his prophetic office, denounced as worthless a religion that was based entirely on ritual observances.

Jeremiah insisted that the claims of God upon His people can never be satisfied by the mere observance of the externals of worship without regard for the higher, essential, moral requirements of His law. "For where religion is cultus and nothing else, it is valueless."⁹ Elsewhere in his writings the prophet declares that God cares nothing for their offerings, that He will not accept them because He has no pleasure in them(6:20;). But the context shows that he refers to the sacrifices of an apostate people who give no heed to His ethical demands.

In chapter 7 Jeremiah pronounces the doom of the temple, the very centre of

⁹Marti: Religion Of The Old Testament, p.151.

the cultus. But there can be no question as to why the sanctuary was to be destroyed. It was not because there was no law by which its existence could be justified. For even while declaring what Jahweh will do to the temple, he speaks of it as the house of Jahweh, "My very own house"(7:11;). But just as He had made a complete end of the sanctuary at Shiloh, "on account of the wickedness of my people, so now with you"(7:12f;). As in Isaiah, "wickedness and worship" God would not tolerate, it was an abomination; away with it. Trust in the sanctity of the temple will not save Judah; the moral integrity of the worshippers is the only sure safeguard of the nation. The prophet's amazement at the failure of the people to grasp this essential truth is expressed in v.9 by the use of the infinitive absolute preceded by the interrogative particle. "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, perjure yourselves, sacrifice to Baal, walk after other gods whom ye know not, and then come to stand before me in this house which is mine, and say, We are saved to do all these abominations?" They thought that the mere observance of the externals of religion would in itself turn aside the threatened judgment of God. They could not see that it was this very thing that had involved them in judgment. The cultus had become a cloak for their sin, a salve to conscience, a substitute for righteous living and just dealing. Those who came to the temple with their gifts for Jahweh thought that they were therefore immune to punishment and secure in the carrying out of their abominable practices. This passage makes it clear that the prophet denounced the cultus because of the primary importance attached to it by the people, to the exclusion of the primary ethical demands of God. Jahweh did not choose Israel in order that they might keep Him supplied with sacrifices, but that they might be obedient to all of His commands and walk in all His ways. The purpose of Jeremiah's words was to destroy the false confidence of the people in the sanctity of the temple, and in the mechanical performance of religious rites.

Another consideration which supports this interpretation of the prophet's attitude to the cultus is the fact, that the cultus has a place in the picture which he draws of the restoration. In ch.26:17; he declares that men shall come from all parts of the land to Jerusalem bringing all kinds of sacrifices to the temple. In 31:14; he affirms that Jahweh will abundantly satisfy the soul of the priest with fatness. And in Jerusalem there shall again be heard the joyful sound s of the worshippers, "who bring their thank-offerings unto the house of Jahweh, singing, Give thanks to the Lord of Hosts, for Jahweh is good, for His kindness never fails"(33:11;). Nor shall there ever come a time when the Levites shall lack a man "to offer burnt-offerings in my presence, or to burn oblations or to offer sacrifices"(33:18;).

The Israel of the restoration will be a new Israel, a people cleansed from all iniquity, all their sins and transgressions forgiven(33:6-8;), and living in the fear of Jahweh and in obedience to His will(32:39,40;). Israel's obedience to the divine will will be motivated by the law of God written on their hearts rather than by the sanctions of the external ordinances of the law of Moses(31:31ff;). It is this change in the moral condition of the people that accounts for the changed attitude of Jeremiah. He preached a great ideal, and because the people substituted ritual for it he denounced them and denied that it was what God had required from them. But in the restoration, when the essentials of true religion shall have been restored to the central place in religion, the ritual of worship will then be the expression of a truly pious heart, and as such it will be acceptable to Jahweh. But so long as the cultus is divorced from true piety, and the sacrifices are offered by a people, who, by their flagrant violations of the ethical demands of God, have put themselves out of covenant relation with Him, Jahweh hath no desire whatever for their sacrifices.

The pre-exilic prophets denounced the cultus because there were many ele-

ments in it that were foreign to the primitive Jahweh religion. It expressed a spirit of cold formality rather than of true piety; it was made a substitute for rather than a help to a life of righteousness; and because of all this the prophets declared it to be unacceptable to Jahweh. Dr. Paterson points out that the prophetic program of reform embraced both practice and theory. All heathen elements of the cultus- sacrifice to idols, to sacred beasts, the shameful excesses connected with the sacrificial feasts were forbidden and condemned(cf. Hos.4:13; Amos 2:4;), and on the theoretical side they called for a revision of the popular estimate of the place of the cultus in religion, and of the place of the sacrifice in the cultus. The popular conception that God was well-pleased with their observance of religious rites and ceremonies was brought into sharp antithesis to the prophetic conception, namely, that compared with morality ceremonies are unimportant(cf. I Sam.15:22; it is the main burden of Amos, Hos.6:6; Mic.6:6f;).¹⁰ And even those rites which were not of a distinctly heathen character were repudiated and declared to be unacceptable to Jahweh at the hands of a sinful people. No worship, however simple it be, could be acceptable to God coming, as it did, from a people so absolutely oblivious of His moral requirements as Israel was. They had despised the law of Jahweh; the feet that trod His temple courts had trod down the poor; the hands that held out their gifts to Him were stained with innocent blood; and the lips that chanted His praise were stained with the sin of perjury. That which should have been a mere accessory of religion they had made essential. They thought that security was assured to them in the multitude of their gifts, and that these fulfilled the requirements of their God. But over against such a conception of religion the prophets set that of moral worth; righteousness is greater and more fundamental to true religion than ritual, and moral character more pleasing to Jahweh than ceremonial. Therefore, "Let judgment roll down as waters,

¹⁰Article "Sacrifice" Hastings Dictionary Of The Bible, vol.IV, p.335f.

and righteousness as a perennial stream." "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." These are Jahwah's requirements. "Requirements few and simple, yet difficult, because they cut clean across the ingrained selfishness of the human heart, and demanded nothing less than a complete reversal of their present principle of action."¹¹ f

¹¹Kirkpatrick: The Doctrines Of The Prophets, p.99.

CHAPTER IX
INTERPRETATION OF THE PROPHETS' ATTITUDE
TO THE CULTUS- Contd.
(Viewed In The Light Of Their Conception Of God)

The attitude of the prophets to the cultus of Israel was determined primarily by their conception of Jahweh and of His relation to Israel. The religious life of Israel was wholly wrong because it was based upon a fundamentally erroneous conception of God. It was clearly evident to the prophets that the people did not know the real character of Jahweh. Therefore, when they thought they were rendering Him their most zealous and acceptable service they were doing Him the greatest dishonor.

The prophets were not concerned with the legality or the illegality of the cultus per se. Their protests went far beyond any questions of law; they appealed to a higher sanction than law, the ethical Being of Jahweh Himself. And because they possessed, or rather were possessed by, an overwhelming conviction of the spiritual and ethical perfection of Jahweh they were insistent in emphasizing that moral worth was of supremely greater value in the sight of God than the most elaborate ceremonial in His honor. He who had been Israel's God from the beginning of their history was a righteous God whose first demand upon those with whom He had entered into covenant relation was for righteous living. And so true is this of the prophets that the keynote of their teaching is sounded in some great ethical term. Amos is the prophet of justice to a prosperous but profligate age; Hosea is the prophet of love to an apostate people; Isaiah is the prophet of holiness and faith to a sensuous and morally indifferent age; Micah is the prophet of social justice and the champion of the poor and oppressed; and Jeremiah is the prophet of the new order and the new covenant to an age of turmoil and transition. All of their utterances were declarative of the divine character and of the moral principles regulating God's dealings with His people.

The Prophets tested everything at the touchstone of the righteousness, the holiness, and the justice of God, and whatever was contrary to these they rejected, and whatever furthered them they nurtured. Amos rebuked men for their neglect and impatient toleration of certain elements of the cult. The New Moon and the Sabbath acted as a check upon their greed and dishonesty, and because they did they chafed over the observance of these holy days. Anything which obscured the righteous character of God and blinded men to the divine demand for justice in their relations with one another, the prophets regarded as a snare and a delusion. And such was the cultus of Israel as the prophets saw it in operation. The very best things in religion and life become vitiated when prostituted to evil ends, or when through misuse or mistaken emphasis they impede the growth of true religion. The forms of religion, be they ever so good and necessary, do not constitute religion. And when the form is substituted for the essence of religion and the ritual for the service of men, then such forms become empty and worthless, and, therefore, unacceptable to God.

The prophets not only conceived of Jahweh as an ethically perfect Being, but they also conceived of Him as having entered into covenant relation with Israel. These are the two great ideas around which all of their teaching revolves. And when the implications of this latter doctrine- Israel as the covenant people of Jahweh- are considered it is not difficult to understand the attitude of the prophets to the cultus.

Jahweh having chosen Israel from among the nations of the earth to be His people placed them under the obligation of being faithful to the terms of the covenant. The divine purpose of the covenant was the building of the kingdom of God on earth through Israel. Israel was the kingdom of God on earth in all its visible forms, and in the purpose of God she was destined to attain to ethical perfection and to become the spiritual leader of the nations. Such

in the thought of the prophets was the purpose of the relation into which Jahweh entered with Israel whereby He became their God and they His people.

The sovereignty of God is the norm of Amos' thought; it dominates his theology. Jahweh is not just the national Deity of Israel, He is supreme over all the nations. Israel's relation to Him is one sense peculiar. But this only increases the seriousness of the situation, for Jahweh's choice of Israel laid upon them greater responsibility; and this intimate relation made it imperative that He should be more strict with them.¹ In popular thought the relation between Israel and Jahweh was guaranteed by the magnificence and the munificence of their ritual system. The prosperity and power which attended the nation were evidences of divine favor. And they sought to share with Jahweh the prosperity with which He had blessed them. Was that all that Jahweh required from His covenant people? There is no mistaking the reply of Amos. Against such a heathen and materialistic conception of God "Amos threw himself with an earnestness that may be called desperate."²

Amos took the position that Israel was the people of God in virtue of the free choice of Jahweh for a moral and spiritual end; and that which validates their relation to Jahweh is a community of mind, a common purpose(3:3;). The character of Israel was to be different from that of other peoples because the character of their^{God} was different from that of other gods. Israel seemed to be conscious of its choice by Jahweh, but not of the true implications of that choice, or of the manner in which they were to give an objective manifestation of their relation to the sovereign God of righteousness. The worship carried on at the sanctuaries "was so unworthy of His ethical and spiritual nature that it was indistinguishable from the worship of the conquered Baals."³ Not only was the worship at variance with the ethical nature of Israel's God, but the conduct of the worshippers belied their relation to Him. Amos insisted that Jahweh was a God of righteousness, and that He demanded righteousness and good-

¹Cf. H.P.Smith: Old Testament History, p.213.

²Ibid, p.213.

³Knudson: Religious Teachings Of The Old Testament, p.73

ness and justice from the people of His choice. "Amos thus lays all the stress of his teaching on justice. For him justice is virtually identified with religion. God is righteous: and what he demands of His people is not sacrifice, but righteousness- honesty and fair dealing towards all men. And as He is Lord of the world, whatsoever stands in the way of righteousness must perish, the wayward policy of Israel no less than the degrading superstitions and cruelties of the nations."⁴

The teaching of Hosea is based on the idea of a covenant relation between Jahweh and Israel. It is an ethical relation. God has made Israel the recipient of His love, expecting in return the undivided love and devotion of Israel. So intimate is the relation between God and Israel that Hosea thinks of it in terms of the marriage relation: Jahweh is Israel's husband. What manner of wife should Israel have been? She should have loved Him who first loved her, and to whose love she owed all that she possessed. But the charge which Hosea makes against Israel is that of conjugal infidelity; she hath broken the covenant; the love and obedience which she owed to Jahweh she gives to other lovers. The hearts of the people are estranged from God, therefore, their sacrifices are unavailing: God will not accept the offerings of those who ignore the essential part of His requirements(6:6;).

Hosea, like Amos, looked at the cultus from the point of view of his conception of God and of His relation to Israel, and he saw in it a gross misrepresentation of the character of God and a complete negation of Israel's relation to Him. Universal corruption prevailed in the nation, and this Hosea attributes^{to} a lack of knowledge of the true nature of God. He "finds the fountain of life in the knowledge of God, the loving intimacy with which the devout man stands related to his God. In the lack of this knowledge lay the real root of Israel's sin.-----Sacrifice and offerings were no moral equivalent of knowledge. Indeed, the worship as practised by

⁴A.R.Gordon: The Prophets Of The Old Testament, p.58.

Israel 'under oaks and terebinths' was the crowning sin of the age: it was whoredom against Jahweh. It seduced men from the worship He delighted in, and was the fruitful source of drunkenness and debauchery and all uncleanness."⁵

The prophet Isaiah in his inaugural vision saw Jahweh sitting upon a throne high and lifted up; he heard the heavenly creatures call to one another, "Holy, holy, holy is Jahweh of Hosts, His glory is the fulness of the earth." As a result of this vision Isaiah became the prophet of the divine perfection. In his teaching he emphasized the sovereign majesty of God and the glory of His holiness. It is Jahweh, who, in working out His divine purpose, uses the nations of the earth as His instruments and directs their movements and determines their destinies((Isa.7:18,19; 10:5,7-15;)). Jahweh is the Holy One of Israel. But in emphasizing the holiness of God Isaiah put an ethical content into it. Jahweh is supremely good, ethically perfect. What, then, was the relation of Israel to the sovereign, holy God, whose glory was the fulness of the earth? Hosea thought of the relationship between Jahweh and Israel in terms of marriage: but Isaiah in the opening chapter of his book speaks of it in terms of an even closer relationship, that of father and son. "I have reared and brought up sons." And since He was the Holy One of Israel, it followed that the nation which He had chosen to be His people must exhibit holiness in its life. Isaiah did not say in so many words, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy," but he implied it in his teaching. In the parable of the vineyard(ch.5)he clearly taught that Jahweh expected the fruits of holiness from His people. And the charge which he makes against them is, that they have despised the Holy One of Israel(1:4;).

The actual condition of Israel is in sharp contrast to the divine ideal. Jahweh looked for justice(מִשְׁפָּט, mishpat)and lo bloodshed(מִצָּדִיק, mispah), for righteousness(מִצְדָּקָה, zedakah) and lo a cry(מִצְעָקָה, zeakah). Far

⁵A.R.Gordon: The Prophets Of The Old Testament, p.65.

Israel, far from being a holy nation is a race of degenerates; instead of being exalted in righteousness they are bowed down with the weight of their iniquity(1:4;). The prophet does not regard the cultus as the cause of, or even the most flagrant of Israel's sins, it is an aggravation of their enormity. Worship that is offered to God as a substitute for righteous living is an abomination to God. Truly they were a people of unclean lips; they offered Jahweh the homage of their lips while their hearts were far from Him.

Isaiah's contemporary, Micah, paints an appalling picture of the moral and social conditions in Israel. The fundamental laws of social morality and the elementary principles of justice and mercy are openly and shamelessly violated. In no part of the Scriptures is the contrast between the popular conception of God and His requirements, and that of the prophets presented so sharply as in Micah 6:6-8; "What doth Jahweh require of thee?" And the answer of the people is, sacrifices, yearling calves, thousands of rams, rivers of oil, their first-born sons. Nay, answers the prophet, "He has told you what is good; Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with thy God." In this way God is most truly served. "In this simple but comprehensive summary of man's duty to his neighbor and to God, Micah takes up and combines the teaching of his predecessors and his great contemporary. Amos had insisted upon the paramount necessity of civil justice; Hosea had proclaimed that it was not sacrifice but loving-kindness that God desired; on of the prominent doctrines of Isaiah was the majesty of Jehovah, to which reverent humility on man's part is the fitting correlative."⁶

Like Amos and Hosea, Jeremiah based his teaching on his conception of the relation of Jahweh to Israel. By the terms of the covenant He had become their God and they His people. Jahweh was a covenant-keeping God, but Israel had forsaken Him and gone after other gods. Jahweh had planted them a noble vine but they had become a degenerate plant(2:21;). There was universal moral cor-

⁶Kirkpatrick: The Doctrines Of The Prophets, p.226f.

ruption(5:1-29;), scepticism prevailed(5:12;), and idolatry was openly practised throughout the land(1:16; 7:16; 8:2,19; 11:13; 32:29;). And yet, this people who, by their manifold sins against God had rendered the covenant null and void, had implicit confidence in the external forms of religion and offered sacrifices to Jahweh which He no longer desired(6:20;). Such was their fanatical trust in the house of God that it strengthened them in their resolve to do evil(7:8ff;). It was heathen worship based upon a heathen conception of Jahweh. "So much lip-service, so many sacrifices and festivals, so much joyous revelling in the sanctuary, might be supposed to have sufficiently appeased one of the common Baals, those half-womanish phantoms of deity whose delight was imagined to be in feasting and debauchery. Nay, so much zeal might have propitiated the heart of a Molech. But the God of Israel was not as these, nor one of these; though His ancient people were too apt to conceive thus of Him."⁷

Jeremiah conceived of Jahweh as an ethical Being whose first demand upon His people was for righteous living. Therefore, the command, "Amend your life and doings, that I may dwell among you in the temple here," is a statement of the one essential condition of fellowship with Jahweh.

Jeremiah was the prophet of personal religion. The old covenant had failed, but Jahweh in His covenant faithfulness would still keep covenant with His people. He would make a new covenant; the covenant relationship would be transferred from a national to an individual basis. It would be a spiritual covenant, its laws written on the hearts of men; based on ethical sanctions, it would come to objective expression in ethical conduct and character. And then Jahweh and Israel will live together in that ideal relationship which He had purposed from the beginning. "I will be a God to them, and they to me a people"(31:31ff;). The covenant consists in a loving personal relation to God, based on forgiveness and mutual confidence."⁸

⁷ Ball: The Prophecies of Jeremiah, vol.I, p.153f.

⁸ A.R.Gordon: Prophets of the Old Testament, p.196.

Thus, the conflict between the prophets and the cultus was primarily a conflict between two entirely opposite conceptions of God. From the point of view of the popular conception the cultus was of paramount importance; for everything which affected their national life depended upon the proper worship of their national God. But from the point of view of the prophets, Jahweh was not only the God of Israel, He was the sovereign God of all the nations, who, because He is a righteous God, puts righteousness first in His claims on men.

His will is an ethical law and His true service consists essentially in moral obedience to His holy will. Hence, the prophets denied that ceremonial observance was a proper or fitting correlative to the righteousness and justice and love and holiness of God. They insisted on putting the higher ~~and~~ spiritual and ethical elements of the nature of Jahweh first. "The centre of gravity in Hebrew religion was shifted from ceremonial observance and local sacra to righteous conduct. Religion and righteousness were henceforth welded into an indissoluble whole. The religion of Jahweh was no longer to rest upon the narrow perishable basis of locality and national sacra, but on the broad adamantine foundations of a universal divine sovereignty over all mankind and of righteousness as the essential element in the character of Jahweh and in His claims on men."⁹

When viewed in the light of their higher conception of Jahweh the attitude of the prophets to the cultus becomes intelligible. They stressed the righteousness of God. And because they saw, on the one hand, elements of the cultus so definitely heathen in character as to constitute a positive negation of the ethical nature of Jahweh, and on the other hand, elements which in themselves were not objectionable but were performed in such an unspiritual and formal manner as to make them so, the prophets denounced the whole system. The rites of the cultus, "instead of expressing the spirit of true piety were regarded as a substitute for it. Instead of leading to a life of righteousness they were

⁹O.C.Whitehouse: Article "Hebrew Religion" Encycl. Brittanica, vol.13, P.183.

regarded as dispensing with the need of such a life."¹⁰

As a consequence of their false conception of Jahweh the lives of the worshippers were not consonant with His ethical requirements. Their worship, therefore, became a serious offence; it was adding insult to injury to ask the God of righteousness to accept the gifts of unrighteousness. Over against such worthless and unspiritual ceremonialism the prophets urged personal righteousness as the one essential element in the true service of a spiritually and ethically perfect Being. The claim which Jahweh made upon the people with whom He had entered into covenant relation was for their whole life, and He would be satisfied with nothing less.

The prophets did not reject the cultus per se, nor did they denounce all outward ceremonies and performances as impediments of true religion. They were not spiritualists who rejected all external forms of religion. What they did condemn was the unhallowed and materialistic cultus of their contemporaries and the false trust which they put in it. The pre-exilic prophets contended for a system of worship that would reflect the ethical character of Jahweh, and worshippers who would exhibit in their own lives a moral worth which would constitute the basis of their relation to and the ground of their acceptance with Jahweh. Therefore, what the prophets condemned and sought to change was not the cult in itself, but the mistaken and false conception of God upon which the whole system of ritual rested.

Did the cult "materialize faith" as G.A. Smith affirms it did? Was it not rather the materialistic conception of Jahweh held by the worshippers that materialized the cultus? In my judgment the latter is the truer view to take, and that it approximates the view of the prophets themselves. Such a view does not pre-clude the idea of a cult refined and brought into harmony with the ethical conception of Jahweh which the prophets proclaimed, and which would then be a true expression of a real and heartfelt exercise of religion rather than

¹⁰ Knudson: Religious Teachings Of The Old Testament, p. 164.

a substitute for it. Amos, as I have already pointed out, recognized certain elements in the cultus which ministered to moral ends, namely, the Sabbath and the New Moon. These holy seasons served, for a time at least, to restrain evil men from immoral practices. And what Amos condemned was the attitude shown towards these holy days, which were integral parts of the cultus. And Hosea, while denouncing and predicting the complete destruction of the cultus, yet regards "the absence of all worship a penalty, even the supreme penalty(2:4;).

-----All acts of worship, private and national are to cease, because Jahweh has broken off relation to His people; and the life of the nation was to become thereby so much a meaner thing.-----Hosea as he thought of all this thought of their life as a people, not merely as having lost something, but as having lost a great thing- the means of expressing how absolute was its dependence on God's mercy, and how deep was its gratitude for His care."¹¹

Isaiah, to whom the divine call came as he was at prayer in the temple, did not hesitate to include prayer as one of the elements of worship which God spurned(1:15;). A distinction must surely be made, even as our Lord made it, between prayers which are a mere form of words which have no correspondence to the inner thoughts or disposition of the heart of the worshipper, and prayer which is a true and sincere outpouring of the soul to God.

70 The prophets did not attack the cult because it appeared to lie at the root of all the trouble and encouraged a fundamentally wrong conception of God. In my judgment, the conception of the deity is prior to the cult. There must be a God to worship before there can be a system of worship. And the form which the cultus takes, and the emphasis which is placed upon it, are determined by the worshipper's idea of the character of his Deity. The cult, therefore, is the incarnation of the worshipper's conception of his God; it is the means by

¹¹A.C.Welch: Religion Of Israel Under The Kingdom, p.127.

which he gives concrete form to his idea of God. And that is all ritual can ever be; that which gives it its ethical and spiritual value is the content which the worshipper puts into it. Men offer to God that form of worship which they believe befits His character as they conceive of it. I repeat, therefore, that the prophets did not reject the cultus per se; they sought to cleanse it of its heathen accretions, restore it to its primitive simplicity, and shift the centre of religion from the cultus to practical ethical living, and thus to make it more truly expressive of the ethical character of Jahweh.

Could the cult be animated with the right spirit and made to reflect the true nature of God? Did the prophetic party in Israel think it possible to cleanse it of all its pagan materialistic elements and spiritualize it on the basis of prophetic teaching? What influence did the ethical and spiritual idealism of the prophets have upon the cultus of old Israel? These are the questions which will engage our attention in the concluding part of this discussion.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL IDEALISM
OF THE PROPHETS ON THE CULTUS OF
OLD ISRAEL

CHAPTER X

EARLY ATTEMPTS AT REFORM OF THE CULTUS

Jahweh religion was , as I have attempted to show, superimposed upon the great body of pagan Semitic customs and ideas which the Hebrews had inherited from their Semitic ancestors. When the Israelites entered Canaan they found a type of religion there which was akin to old pagan Semitism, and which made a strong appeal to the ingrained tendencies of the Hebrews. The higher principles and purer ordinances of Jahweh religion were imperilled from the beginning. And, as I have shown, contact with the sensual and degrading rites of Baalism led to a popular religious syncretism. An elaborate ritual of worship was developed which was semi-heathen in character. There was a growing emphasis on ceremonial and an increasing deemphasis of the moral principles of the simpler Jahweh religion. Wickedness and worship flourished together in an unholy alliance. Menaced, as it was, both from within and from without, the marvel is that Jahweh religion did not perish from off the earth. But not only did it maintain its identity, in the end it triumphed over the heathen cults that had threatened its very existence. Those elements of Canaanite religion which it had adopted it reinterpreted and transformed, and what it could not transform it rejected. The evidence of this is to be found in the cultic laws of Israel. This transformation was due to the religious and ethical idealism of the prophets, who from the beginning had remained true to the ideals of Moses, the founder of Israel's religion.

The process of syncretism which began after the settlement in Canaan was a gradual one. But it did not go unchallenged. Powerful influences were at work to restore the Mosaic ideal of religion, and to reenforce the great spiritual and ethical ideals which Moses first enunciated. The prophets set themselves against all that was base and degrading in the popular religion; they sought

to teach such a conception of God as would inevitably lead to a higher and purer type of worship. The struggle of the prophetic party for this ideal was a long and chequered one. But it finally culminated in the great reform of B.C. 621, and the promulgation of the Deuteronomic Code. Before attempting to show wherein the laws of Deuteronomy reflect the influence of the prophetic idealism on the cultus of old Israel, I shall make a brief review of the prophetic movement which led up to it.

The prophetic movement which aimed at the purification of Jahweh worship and its elevation to a higher spiritual plane may be said, so far as the early records show, to have begun with the prophet Samuel. It was Samuel who, in the spirit of Moses, gave utterance to what from that time on became the dominant note in prophecy: "Has Jahweh as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jahweh? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim. Because thou hast rejected the word of Jahweh, he also has rejected thee from being king." (I Sam. 15:22;).

Jahweh religion faced a great crisis in the ninth century. Up until that time Jahweh had maintained His place among the Baals of Canaan. But the crisis came with the introduction of Phoenician Baalism by Jezebel, the Phoenician wife of Ahab (B.C. 875-854). A determined effort was made to make Baalism the national religion of Israel. The issue was Baal or Jahweh as the recipient of Israel's worship and service. The prophet Elijah, whose very name, "Jahweh is God," became a rallying cry for the prophetic party, led the fight against the forces of Baalism (cf. I Kings 17-19, 21). Elijah gained a great victory over the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, by which it was demonstrated that Jahweh was the true God of Israel, if not the only God. "Baal," says Dr. Bewer, "was no real God to Elijah; a man who could mock Baal as he did could

not believe in his reality and power. This fundamental principle of Moses was here reiterated with extraordinary power and effectiveness; Jahweh alone is to be worshipped in Israel! But not only because He is Israel's God, but because He alone is real, because He alone demonstrates His reality by His activity."¹ Another fundamental principle which was reenforced in this struggle was, that Jahweh is a God of righteousness whose demand for righteousness is absolute.

Elisha, the disciple of Elijah, took up the struggle where his master had left off. The task of carrying the program for the extermination of Baalism in Israel to its completion fell to him(cf. I Kings 19:15-18;). Elisha instigated revolution in Syria through which Hazael, who was to become the scourge of Israel, seized the throne(cf. II Kings 8:7ff;), and in Israel, which led to the accession of Jehu, a devotee of Jahweh religion(II Kings 9:1ff;). No mercy was shown to the followers of Baal. "And it shall come to pass that him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay"(I Kings 19:17;).

From the time of Jehu on there was a party in Israel whose whole attitude and manner of life was a protest against the voluptuousness of Baalism; these were the Rechabites. Their father Jonadab was a zealous servant of Jahweh, and he was heart and soul with Jehu in his attempt to destroy Baalism in Israel. He enjoined total abstinence from the fruit of the vine and the living of a simple nomadic-like life as a protest against the corruption of Canaanitish life and religion. The Jahweh followers were no less active in Judah; for a few years after the reform in the N. Kingdom a similar reform was carried out in Judah, but this time under the leadership of a priest, Jehoiada, which led to the overthrow of the cults of Baal(cf. II Kings, ch. 11).

A notable result of the conflict of the prophetic party with Baalism was the writing of the Jahwistic and Elohistic prophetic narratives, for undoubt-

¹The Literature Of The Old Testament, p.47

edly the struggle for the reformation of the worship in Israel supplied the inspiration and the motive for their writing. The dates assigned to these narratives by Old Testament scholars vary from B.C. 900 to B.C. 750.² It is not possible to do more than assign a date somewhere between the two extremes. The fact that the writings of Amos and Hosea contain allusions to events in the narratives of J E would make them prior to these prophets (cf Amos 2:9, 10; 9:7; with Num. 13:27ff; Amos 4:11; with Gen. 19:24f; Hos. 9:10; with Num. 25:3; Hos. 12:13; with Gen. 31:41;). Dr. Driver suggests that these passages in the prophets "may be based upon unwritten tradition."³ But in the judgment of Kittel, "by far the simplest explanation of them is that which takes them to be quotations from writings already in existence.-----The very fact that in these prophets there is a frequent reference to the history shows that the historical impulse had been awakened in the consciousness of the people."⁴ The surest evidence^{ce} of the priority of the J E narratives to Amos and Hosea is found in their religious conceptions and in their attitude towards the local sanctuaries. The conception of Jahweh is not^A advanced as that of the prophets, nor do these narratives reflect the hostile attitude to the high places and popular form of worship so marked of Amos and Hosea. These considerations, together with the general historical conditions reflected in the J E narratives, make it reasonably certain that the prophetic narratives were written sometime before the appearance of the Amos and Hosea. The most probable date is that of the early monarchy. On the whole, the period which followed the reform of the worship is the most likely date. It was a period of comparative prosperity, and peaceful relations obtained between the two kingdoms. I am inclined to accept the date which Dr. Kent assigns to J and E. He affirms that "it was probably under the inspiration of this reformation (that in Judah) that, about 825, the Judean prophets began their great task of writing that comprehensive history which was intended to enforce the covenant then made

²Cf. Driver: Introduction To Literature Of The Old Testament, p. 123.

³Ibid, p. 123.

⁴History Of The Hebrews, vol. I, p. 82.

between Jehovah and the king and the people, that they should be Jehovah's people(II Kings 11:17;)⁵ The E narrative which reflects more advanced ethical standards and more mature conceptions of Jahweh, was later than J, probably by half a century. "All the data point to the middle of the eighth century B.C. as the period in which the main collection of Israel's traditions(technically designated as E) was made."⁶

But more important than questions of date is the character of these narratives and the purpose for which they were written. Their distinctively prophetic character makes it clear that they originated within prophetic circles. Elijah had called the nation back to the ideals of Moses; he reaffirmed the principles which Moses had written into Jahweh religion, namely, the exclusive worship of Jahweh and the inevitable punishment of apostasy; the demand of Jahweh, the righteous God, for righteousness in His people is absolute; and the sovereignty of Jahweh, which is not limited to Israel, for He commissioned His prophet to appoint Hazael king of Syria that he might become the agent of His purpose. These are the principles which are emphasized throughout the prophetic narratives. The purpose of the writers was not merely to record historical facts, but primarily to present to the people a religious interpretation of history. The whole life of the nation is viewed in the light of its relation to Jahweh, who was working out His purpose through the movements and events of their history. There was no other God but Jahweh for Israel. To Him they owed their existence as a nation, and the whole future of their national life depended upon their whole-hearted loyalty and obedience to His will. "Now, therefore, fear Jahweh, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt; and serve ye Jahweh"(Jos.24:14;).

The great principle that Jahweh is a righteous God whose first demand is for righteousness in His people, is reiterated again and again. Living in conform-

⁵The Beginnings Of Hebrew History, p. 36.

⁶Ibid, p.40.

ity with the will of God results in blessing and the favor of God; but to violate or go contrary to the divine purpose is to forfeit the blessing and favor of God. There is an intimate relation between sin and human suffering. Obedience to the divine will is the absolute test of a good man. "Abraham, the friend of God is the type of the ideal man, because he was responsive to every indication of Jehovah's will. Adam and Eve are opposite types because they disobeyed.

-----To do Jehovah's will in thought and deed is the whole duty of man. Thus that direct personal relation between God and the individual which is central in the teachings of Jesus is first clearly expressed in the old Judean narratives."⁷

Religion is lifted up to a high ethical level, even though some of the J stories belong to a lower ethical level. But these are incidental, they are not characteristic; they are but the marks of the early origin of the stories, that which is characteristic is the sincere piety and the earnest desire to do God's will which is manifested by the chief characters in the narratives. It is a religion that is "marked by a true inwardness- for it is not works but implicit trust in God that counts for righteousness(Gen.15:16;)." ⁸

Now, while religion is defined as an inner attitude towards God which will express itself in just and loving acts, yet religious forms and ceremonies are not ignored by the early prophetic writers. True, indeed, J and E differ in their view of the antiquity of sacrifice. J carries it back to the beginning of the race in his story of Cain and Abel. E affirms that the ancestors of the Hebrews worshipped idols beyond the River(cf.Jos.24:2; Gen.31:19;). But in neither J nor E is sacrifice the all-important thing. The reason for Jahweh's rejection of Cain's offering is not to be sought in any ritual law, it was ethical. And in the E story of Saul's rejection(I Sam. 15:22ff;), it is made clear that while sacrifices may be well-pleasing to God, obedience is much more important. The story of Abraham's offering of his son Isaac, while it emphas-

⁷Kent: The Beginnings Of Hebrew History, p.33.

⁸McFadyen: Old Testament Introduction, p.17.

izes the teaching that God demands absolute obedience, even to the extent of giving up one's best and dearest possession, was meant to teach primarily that the common heathen practice of human sacrifice was unacceptable to the God of Israel. The rejection of human sacrifice was absolute; and such sacrifices as were acceptable were conditioned by the inner attitude of him who offered it. Thus was the ancient institution of sacrifice transformed by the religious and ethical idealism of the early prophetic writers.

I have pointed out that the attitude of J and E to the local sanctuaries differs from that of Amos and Hosea, both of whom regarded them as centres of religious corruption. Intensely devoted, as they were, to the worship of Jahweh, yet neither of the prophetic writers found any occasion to attack the worship at the high-places. They accepted the festivals and the cult practices, and they incorporated ritual codes in their narratives which required the offering of sacrifice and the celebration of stated festivals. In recounting the ancient stories the prophetic historians re-interpreted and transformed all of those Canaanite elements which could be assimilated into Israel's religion. The local sanctuaries were sacred places, not because they had been consecrated to Baal, but because they marked the place where God had manifested Himself to their fathers in the past. The sacred trees had been planted and the sacred well dug by their remote ancestors. The pillars of stone did not mark the dwelling-place of Jahweh, they were memorial stones. In this way many of the elements of Canaanite worship were emptied of their heathen significance. The festivals were re-interpreted. There is evidence in the laws of the early period of the prophetic attempt to eliminate all heathen customs and ideas associated with the ancient festivals, and to impart to them a more spiritual and ethical significance. Only that which could be transformed and adapted to the worship of Jahweh was retained, all else was discarded. This explains why, (1) Jahweh religion was singularly free from polytheistic ideas; (2) the

absence of a female counterpart to Jahweh, with all the revolting practices of such a worship; (3) the absence of images in the worship of Jahweh; and (4), the simple eucharistic character of the festivals, from which all sexual excesses were rigorously excluded.

The J E narratives did not furnish the motive for the earliest attempt at reform of the cultus by the prophetic party. But, inspired by the reform, the prophetic historians sought to conserve its results and hold the nation to its new pledged loyalty to Jahweh and the purity of His worship.

The prophetic circles in which the J E narratives originated were motivated by the spirit of Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha, who demanded above all else moral integrity in the people of Jahweh. They thought of the ethical integrity of Jahweh and its corollary, namely, ethical uprightness and worth in His worshipper, and they emphasized it throughout their narratives. The great principle is laid down that the acceptability of the worshipper is determined by the inner disposition of his heart, a principle which was reiterated by all the great prophets, and which did more to transform the religion of Israel and differentiate it from heathen religion than any other, except, of course, the conception of Jahweh as an ethical Being. Yet with all their emphasis on the spiritual and ethical character of true religion these prophetic writers recognized the place of the cultus in the religious life of Israel. They incorporated in their narrative an ancient code of ritual laws purporting to have come originally from Moses. The older J code puts the emphasis [^] where all primitive peoples have put it—upon the ritual of worship; moral conceptions follow as of the moral consciousness [^] a people develops. The ethical spirit of the prophetic writers is most clearly expressed in the Book of The covenant, where morality and worship are joined together. There are great moral principles as well as ceremonial requirements involved in the religion of Israel; duties and obligations to one's fellow-men as well as to God. The early prophetic school did

not reject the cultus. And while they recognized that it could serve useful and worthy ends, they did not regard it as essential to religion. In their redaction of the original Mosaic code they reduced the requirements of the ritual to a minimum of simplicity in contrast to the elaborate cults of Canaan, and they reenforced the great spiritual ideals which it embodied- the unity spirituality, and ethical character of Jahweh. Their great purpose was to lead the people of Israel to a higher conception of Jahweh as an ethical God and to a worship which would find its sanction in ethical considerations. In a word, the great end for which the early prophets wrought was the establishment of a more spiritual and ethical worship of Jahweh. And by "spiritual" I do not mean a worship divorced from all forms and rites, but a true, sincere worship of a truly pious spirit expressing itself through fitting forms and ceremonies. This was the goal of the prophetic party, and in their struggle to attain it they never faltered. Moses set the ideal, and the first great struggle for that ideal was waged under the leadership of Elijah, a struggle which inspired the J E histories in an attempt to conserve its gains and to reiterate the fundamental principles of Mosaism.

The struggle of the prophetic party for a purer and more spiritual system of worship would seem to have been a vain one, although a conflict that produced the J E histories cannot be said to have been barren of results. In the interim between Elijah and the appearance of Amos the cultus of Israel became more and more impregnated with heathenism; it became more elaborate and more corrupt, until it bore but little resemblance to the cult of Mosaism. Nevertheless, the struggle for the purification of Jahweh worship and its elevation to ethical and spiritual levels was carried on unceasingly. There were always the faithful in Israel who sought to remain true to the Mosaic ideal. But they were comparatively few in number, for Baalism with its appeal to the sensuous nature of the Israelites had captivated the heart and the imagination

of the mass of the people. But the prophets, who lived in the vision of God because their hearts were pure, carried on the struggle for a religious worship that would be consonant with the holy character of Israel's God. The pre-exilic prophets saw that "the crisis that faced Israel was not only religious but also social, for the ideals of Baalism were debauchery and prostitution, or, in modern terms, drunkenness and free-love, all the more dangerous because made general and respectable under the sanction of religion."⁹ The prophetic movement for the purification of the cultus came to a climax nearly two centuries after the reforms which inspired the JE histories; this was the great reform of B.C. 621. But in the century preceding Josiah's reform, an attempt was made to bring the worship of Israel into harmony with prophetic teaching, which, because of its bearing on the reform of 621 it becomes necessary to notice briefly.

In the closing years of the eighth century, king Hezekiah, influenced, no doubt, by the preaching of Isaiah and Micah, and probably also by the fate that had befallen Samaria, initiated a work of religious reform which aimed at the purification of Israel's worship. Scholars are divided as to the point of time in Hezekiah's reign when this reform took place.¹⁰ Some accept the statement of the Chronicler (II Chron. 29:3ff;) that it took place in the first year of the reign of Hezekiah. This, however, is doubtful, because of the strong influence of the anti-prophetic party, as well as the moral and religious conditions which are reflected in the book of Micah. The account in Chronicles describes a very elaborate and thoroughgoing work of reform, whereas, II Kings 18:4; speaks only of the removal of the high-places and destruction of the pillars. According to II Kings the reform was aimed at that which had been so sternly denounced by the prophets (cf. Amos 7:9; Hosea 10:8; Micah 1:5;). To have destroyed the high-places would have been to take a long step towards the prophetic goal. The movement must have derived great impetus from Sennacherib's

⁹Peritz: Old Testament History, p. 170.

¹⁰See Article "Hezekiah," Hastings Dictionary Bible, vol. II, p. 377; and W.R. Smith: Prophets Of Israel, pp. 353-364.

invasion of Judah. His destruction of the towns of Judah and the local sanctuaries on the one hand, and on the other hand his inability to take Jerusalem, which was delivered through the miraculous intervention of Jahweh, served to discredit the highplaces and at the same time add to the glory of the temple at Jerusalem. The strong stand taken by Isaiah and his marvellous vindication in this crisis lifted the prophetic party into the ascendancy, thus making it easier for the program of reform to be carried out.

Hezekiah's reform was in harmony with prophetic teaching as far as it went, but it did not go far enough. There was nothing spontaneous about it; it was reform by royal decree, and it was superficial both in character and in results. It did not cut to the root of the evils which the prophets saw were threatening the very existence of the nation. "The reforms which Hezekiah was able to introduce touched only the surface of the national life; a radical amendment of social life, even as regarded the administration of impartial justice, and the establishment of kindlier relations between the rich and the poor- points which Isaiah had always emphasized as fundamental- lay altogether beyond their scope. It was less difficult to work a change in those parts of the visible ordinances of religion which were plainly inconsistent with prophetic teaching."¹¹

A terrible reaction set in following the death of Hezekiah, and the latter end was worse than the first. Various reasons have been advanced to account for the recrudescence of all forms of heathen worship in Jerusalem. Some attribute it to the superficial character of the reform; others hold that the mass of the people were not prepared to accept the lofty standards of life and worship set up in the reform; and yet others declare that it was due to the non-fulfilment of Isaiah's predictions respecting the downfall of Assyria and the advent of the Messiah, which led to the discrediting of the prophetic party and the rise to power and influence of the anti-prophetic party. At any-

¹¹W.R.Smith: Prophets Of Israel, p.359, cf. pp.361ff.

rate, according to II Kings 21:1ff; any reforms that Hezekiah may have effected were undone in the reaction under Manasseh. The high-places and heathen altars and idols which had been destroyed were restored. "The Biblical accounts enumerate no less than five varieties of foreign cults that were flourishing again in Jerusalem. Baal and Astarte worship; stellar worship("the host" or "Queen of heaven"); various types of spiritism and augury; sacred prostitution(or sodomites); Moloch worship(cf. II Kings 23:5-24;). The popularity of these cults is attested by the family circles in which they were practised; the children gathered the wood, the fathers kindled the fire, and the women kneaded the dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven(Jer.7:18; 44:15-19;)." ¹²

Nevertheless, Hezekiah's reform was not in vain; it prepared the way for the great reform that was carried out in the following century by prohibiting idolatry and, in the destruction of the high-places, attempting to centralize the national worship at Jerusalem.

¹²Peritz: Old Testament History, p.200f.

CHAPTER XI
THE GREAT REFORM OF B.C. 621
(Deuteronomy)

During the terrible period of the reigns of Manasseh and Amon the prophetic party was silent but not inactive. For despite the fact that heathenism had become entrenched in the life of the nation, those who were interested in the national religious life, which they saw was imperilled by the foreign cults, had not abandoned the hope that the cultus of Israel could be ultimately purged of every pagan element and spiritualized on the basis of prophetic teaching. This hope the priests shared with the prophets. For, as Dr. Welch points out, there had always been in Judah a closer alliance, "in the sense of community of ideals, between prophecy and priesthood," than in Northern Israel,¹ a fact which was of greatest significance for the future of Israel's religion.

The second book of Kings, chap. 22, contains an account of the discovery of the "Book of the Law" in the 18th. year of king Josiah (B.C. 621). The discovery was made by Hilkiah the priest while having repairs made to the temple. The book was ultimately brought to the king, and the effect of its reading was electrical. The requirements of the book were completely at variance with existing conditions and practices. The king summoned a great assembly of the priests, prophets, and all the people, to whom the book was read. A covenant was made before Jahweh "to walk after Jahweh, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant." (II Kings 23:3;).

A great religious reform was carried out on the basis of the requirements of the "Book of the Law." High-places and heathen shrines were destroyed; the asherah by the side of the altar was cut down and burned; and all heathen symbols and images were removed from the temple; idolatry, witchcraft, and

¹The Religion Of Israel Under The Kingdom, p. 123f.

star worship were abolished, and the Passover was celebrated. It marked the end of the terrible religious apostasy which had prevailed from the beginning of Manasseh's reign, and the triumph of Jahwism over the heathen cults.

Because of the close similarity between the requirements of the book of Deuteronomy and the character of the reformation, ~~xxxxxxxixxxxxxxxixxxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ it is now generally believed that the book discovered in the temple was Deuteronomy, or at least the main part of it. The evils which the Josianic reform sought to correct were those condemned in the book of Deuteronomy. The modern critical view is, that the book discovered in the temple was written during the reign of Manasseh and originated in prophetic circles. When the prophets could no longer speak publicly, "they took the old laws and customs of the nation and brought them up to-date, making them express the reforms which they felt the nation needed." Much of the material in the book of Deuteronomy is old, as Dr. Welch suggests,² but the laws of the primitive code have been recast to meet new needs, new ideals, and new conditions. In the words of Dr. Welch; "The old material was placed in a new setting and is used to embody a new aim."³ However, the sacred shrines, the sacred pillars, and the asherim, which the J E writers sought to divest of the heathen associations by re-interpreting them, are prohibited by Deuteronomy. Anything and everything that possesses heathen influence or character, or is suggestive of a heathen deity, is removed.⁴ And that which is retained is permeated with the spirit and the teaching of the prophets. On every hand there is evidence of the prophetic aim to eliminate from the cultus of Israel everything of a distinctively heathen nature, and at the same time to control and guard old usages and ceremonies which are retained in the ritual against heathen contamination. "Jahweh was different from other gods. The difference was marked in His ritual."⁵ An examination of the teaching of Deuteronomy on the more important elements of the worship will bear this out.

²Religion Of Israel Under The Kingdom, p.193.

³Ibid, p.193.

⁴Cf. A.C. Welch: The Code Of Deuteronomy, p.198f. ⁵Ibid, p.217.

1. The Unity of Jahweh. Jahweh alone is God, therefore He alone is to be worshipped. All idols and objects of worship of an idolatrous nature must be destroyed. This involved not only the extermination of all foreign cults, but also the elimination of all images and heathen symbols from Jahweh worship. The experiences of the past had taught the prophetic party that Jahweh was a unique God, who sustained a unique relation to Israel. He it was who sustained Israel(cf.4:35f;). The most striking demonstration of the impotence of the heathen gods, and of Jahweh's power to save and protect His people, was made in the age immediately preceding Deuteronomy, when the armies of Sennacherib marched through Judah laying it waste. The gods of the high-places were impotent to help the people, but Jahweh delivered Jerusalem and brought destruction upon the Assyrian armies. The unity and uniqueness of Jahweh as the only God worthy of worship, not only of Israel but of all nations, is the ruling idea of Deuteronomy. Jahweh is "God of gods and Lord of lords"(10:17;); "there is none else besides Him"(4:35ff; 6:4;); He is a covenant keeping God(7:9;); graven images and every form of idolatry is an abomination to Him(7:25f; 12:31; 13:14; 18:12; 20:18; 27:15;); heaven and earth and all that is therein are His possession (10:14;); He exercises dominion over all peoples(7:19;); He is a spiritual Being(4:12ff;), who cannot be represented by any material image. "Being such a God, He is jealous of all rivals(7:4; 29:24-26; 31:16,17;), and hence all temptations to idolatry must be removed from the land; the Canaanites must be completely exterminated and all the altars, pillars, asherim, and images destroyed(7:1-5,16; 20:16-18; 12:2,3;)." ⁶

The great doctrine of the unity and the uniqueness of Jahweh, the God of Israel, was implicit in Mosaism and became explicit in the teachings of the pre-exilic prophets. In the forefront of the religious requirements of the primitive code is the injunction that Israel shall worship no other but Jahweh. At this stage it was monolatry, Jahweh as the only God of Israel, not the one only God.

⁶International Standard Biblical Encyclopaedia, vol.II, p.836.

But it contained the germ of monotheism, and it remained for the prophets to develop it. Reference was made in the previous chapter to Elijah's conflict with Baalism, which was a struggle for Mosaic ideals of worship. There is a difference of opinion among scholars as to what was the real attitude of Elijah to Baal and how he conceived of Jahweh. H.P. Smith takes the view that Elijah recognized other gods within their own jurisdiction.⁷ Others take the view that a man who could pour out ridicule upon Baal as Elijah did, certainly did not conceive of him as having any real existence at all. Such ridicule, in the opinion of Kautzsch, "is equivalent to a complete denial, not only of the power but of the very existence of Baal."⁸ This view implies that Jahweh was to be worshipped, not because He alone was the God of Israel, but because He was the only real God. There is truth in both views. But I accept the statement of Dr. Knudson as a fair interpretation of Elijah's attitude: he says, "What Elijah did was to claim for Jahweh a unique divinity, such a divinity as could not be attributed to Baal or any other rival deity."⁹ It was not strict monotheism, but it was a long step on the way to it.

The idea of Jahweh as the only God was developed by the great prophets of the pre-exilic period. Again and again Jahweh is set over against the idols of the heathen who are declared to be no gods; but Jahweh is declared to be the God of Israel. The prophetic word for idols is 'elilim(עֲלִילִים) non-entities (cf. Hosea 8:4ff; 13:4; Isa. 2:8; 18:7;). Jahweh is not only the God of Israel, He alone is God, the only God, who is supreme in the affairs of the nations, directing their movements and guiding their destinies and using them as the agents of His purpose(Isa. 10:5ff; Micah 4:11;). He punishes other nations besides Israel for their sins(Amos chs. 1,2). He will be worshipped in the future by all nations(Isa. 18:7,23-25; Micah 4:1ff;). The prophets arrived at the monotheistic conception of Jahweh through the application of the old traditional conception of Him to new needs and new situations. With the expansion of their

⁷Religion Of Israel, p.86 ⁸Art. "Religion Of Israel" Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, vol.V, p.654. See Bewer: Literature Of Old Test. p.47.

⁹Religious Teachings Of The Old Testament, p.85.

needs and the enlargement of their contacts with other nations, their conception of God took on a richer and fuller content. The relation of Jahweh to other nations was brought into the focus of their thought, and they saw Him as the God of history, interesting Himself in the movements of the nations and using them to further His righteous ends. Once Jahweh had been established as the universal Ruler practical monotheism had been established, and by implication heathen gods ceased to have any real existence as deities. Jahweh "alone is real, because He demonstrates His reality by His activity" among the nations of the earth.

It has been said that "the constant note of the D code is Jahwism not monotheism."¹⁰ I fail to see the distinction here. Jahwism in the teachings of the prophets is the equivalent of monotheism. And surely with the Deuteronomists monotheism was the correlate of Jahwism! The Deuteronomists crystallized the prophetic teaching on the idea of God in a single sentence; "Jahweh our God is one Jahweh," and this together with the attitude which they manifest to other gods makes it clear, in my judgment, that they took the view that there was but one God who was worthy to be called God, and that He was Jahweh the God of Israel.

2. The Sanctuary. Deuteronomy 12:2-7; requires that all the altars and high-places be destroyed together with all their paraphernalia- the sacred pillars, graven images, and asherim. And it lays down what has been regarded as the central requirement of Deuteronomy, namely, that "to the place which Jahweh your God shall choose out of all your tribes, to put His name, shall ye resort, and thither shalt thou come." This is commonly interpreted as the law of the single sanctuary, involving the centralization of worship at one place, and that place Jerusalem. This interpretation has been challenged in late years, notably by Prof. A.C. Welch. He contends that centralization is no requirement of the D code, but that it has been read into it. All that is required is, that Jahweh

¹⁰Cf. The Code Of Deuteronomy, p.202.

be worshipped at sanctuaries which have some association with Him, and after a ritual of His ordering. "Jahweh," says Dr. Welch, "has located His name in certain places; and these are reserved for His worship. To these must be reserved also His people's offerings. It was the later priesthood which interpreted the requirement of D respecting the place of worship."¹¹ Dr. Welch's argument is cogent and forceful, but I am not quite ready to accept his conclusion. Perhaps further study of it may lead to some modification of my view. But considering the history of the local sanctuaries and the increasing prestige of the temple at Jerusalem, I cannot but believe that the aim of this requirement was to outlaw worship at the high-places and centralize it at Jerusalem. It was, of course, a revolutionary law, and one which no doubt involved hardships on many. But that is true of every great reform or step forward. Desperate conditions call for radical treatment, and the religious conditions at that time were desperate enough to justify the application of any remedy that held the promise of reform.

While most of the laws found in the earlier codes (about three-fourths of them) are represented in Deuteronomy, frequently the usage permitted by the earlier codes is either modified or altogether abrogated by D. The primitive code recognized the legitimacy of the many altars scattered throughout the land of Israel. Nor do the J E writers have any word of condemnation for the high-places or local sanctuaries. They, as I have already pointed out, sought to divest them of all heathen associations and significance by reinterpreting them. And what Dr. Welch says of the Deuteronomists is, it seems to me, more true of the J E writers, namely, that "what interests the legislators is the character, not the unity, of the place of worship."¹²

The high-places were centres of religious corruption. The prophets strongly denounced them, not because they violated the law of a single sanctuary, but because they were idolatrous shrines to which the people resorted to seek coun-

¹¹The Code Of Deuteronomy, chap. II.

¹²Ibid, p.30.

sel from their graven images. And Bethel had become "Beth-aven," house of iniquity, and was, therefore doomed to destruction. What was true of Bethel was true of other sacred shrines which were regarded as having some association with Jahweh(cf. Hosea 10:8; Amos 7:9;). The prophetic historian regarded the establishment of high-places as the chief sin of Israel(I Kings 12:31f; 3:2,32;) and as having finally led to its undoing. And he is consistent in condemning Jeroboam I for setting up two sanctuaries, one at Dan and one at Bethel, as rivals of the sanctuary at Jerusalem. But in spite of the protests and warnings of the prophets conditions steadily grew worse; the heathenism of the high-places invaded the worship of the temple at Jerusalem, and pagan cults flourished openly in the courts of Jahweh's house. The prophetic party came to realize that a pure worship could not be developed in Israel as long as the local sanctuaries remained as sources of corruption and breeding places of idolatry, and in this they were supported by the priests. What chance had the lofty religious and ethical teachings of the prophets against such heathenism as prevailed during the reign of Manasseh? The ancient sanctuaries, to which heathen traditions and degrading customs still clung in spite of their reinterpretation by J and E, must be destroyed. And Jerusalem, which the events of history had shown to be favored above all other sanctuaries as the real habitation of Jahweh, was to become the centre of the national religious life.

It was a drastic step, but it was boldly taken; it meant the abrogation of older laws, but the exigencies of the situation demanded it. And in this revolutionary change we see the influence of prophetic idealism. To the principle of the unity of God the Deuteronomists added that of the unity of the sanctuary. The many sanctuaries at which Jahweh was worshipped tended to destroy in the popular mind the idea of the unity of Jahweh. The Jahweh of Bethel, of Dan, of Shiloh, and of Jerusalem would readily come to be thought of as distinct personalities. The Deuteronomists reasoned that if Jahweh were one, then He

had but one legitimate sanctuary wherein He might be worshipped.

3. The Priesthood. With the thought of only one place where Jahweh may be acceptably worshipped there goes the thought of a distinct class of ministers who may acceptably officiate at the chosen sanctuary. In providing for this Deuteronomy again radically modifies the old usage permitted by the primitive codes. In the early period each household as well as each community could have its altar. And in this respect the custom of the pre-Mosaic period approximated that of the most primitive Semitic usage. But as society becomes more complex there is a tendency to set aside certain persons to perform the functions of the priest. In the view of the early Old Testament writers, as I have pointed out elsewhere in this discussion, the exercise of the priestly function was in the hands of Moses' family. And while the primitive codes make no provision for a monopoly of priestly functions by the Levites, there is evidence of a growing tendency to do so, a tendency which came to a culmination in the code of D.¹³ In the early period of settlement non-priests performed priestly functions; Gideon(Jud.6:20;), Manoah(Jud.13:16f;), Saul(I Sam.13:19;), David(II Sam. 6), and Solomon(I Kings 8:14,54f;). But there was a tendency to prefer Levites(cf. Jud. chs.17,18). The fact that the Levites were clansmen of Moses, zealots for Jahweh worship(cf.Ex.32:26-29;), and without any settled residence in Israel, may have led to their being preferred as priests. There are references in later literature to the "tribe of Levi" exercising priestly functions(cf.Deut.33:10; Micah 3:11;). Aaron, who is prominent in the J E narrative, is regarded in Deuteronomy as the father of an hereditary priesthood. Thus by its law of one sanctuary and one class of priests serving in it Deuteronomy sweeps away the family altar and the local sanctuary, and with their passing goes the old primitive usage of a priest-father who presided over the family altar, and the priest of the local sanctuary. All non-Levites were divested of their priestly character and functions.

¹³For a full discussion of the origin of the Levitical priesthood see Gray: Sacrifice In The Old Testament, chap.XVII.

So drastic a step created serious problems for the Levites themselves. With the centralization of worship at one place not all of the Levites could be employed at the temple in priestly service; and with the abolition of the local sanctuaries many of them who had served there were at once deprived of their means of living. But the Deuteronomists sought to obviate any hardship by making provision for their maintenance. The Levite is to have no inheritance in Israel (Deut. 18:1f;), back of which there was probably an ethical reason suggested by the experiences of the past, that of preventing priestly extortion and the private use of temple property. But for the maintenance of the Levite he is to be given the choice parts of the animal sacrifices, as well as the firstfruits of the land (Deut. 18:1-8;). The problem of unemployment was met by assigning various duties to the Levites. They were chosen to act as ministers in the temple (21:5;); to perform judicial functions in a court of final appeal (17:8-13;); to issue instructions for the treatment of leprosy (24:8;); to present the firstfruits to Jahweh for the people (26:1-4;); to encourage the hosts of Israel before going into battle (20:2;); to pronounce a curse (27:14ff;); to be custodians of the law (17:18;); and to be bearers of the ark (10:8;).

How is such a departure from ancient usage to be explained or justified? Were the lines so sharply drawn between the priesthood and the laity in the interest of priestly aggrandizement? I do not think so. Like the law of the central sanctuary, the law governing the priesthood was designed in the interests of a purer worship and the elimination of religious abuses. The corruptions that defiled the worship of Jahweh at the local sanctuaries, if not openly encouraged, were permitted by the local priests. The priest of Bethel openly resented Amos' denunciation of the cultus. Hosea held the priests responsible for the people's ignorance of the real character of Jahweh because of their neglect of their teaching function. And they are condemned because they had perverted their holy office to selfish and unholy ends. They are condemned not

only for failure to fulfil their holy functions, but also for positive wickedness which unfits them to minister before a holy God(cf. Hos.4:6-9; 5:1; 6:9; Mic.3:11; Zeph.3:4; Jer.2:8; 5:31; 6:13; 14:18; 23:11;). Any attempt at the reform of the cultus could not but take cognizance of what the prophets had to say about the priests and the measure of responsibility that attached to them for the evil conditions that existed. And this the Deuteronomists did. The result was the setting up of a special class of men to whom the conduct of the worship was intrusted. In this way the reformers hoped, with the centralization of worship at Jerusalem, to protect the worship from the abuses of the past. The tribe of Levi had in the past shown its devotion to Jahweh, and this fact, together with traditional kinship with Moses, may have prompted the recognition of the Levites as the only legitimate priests of Jahweh. At anyrate, that which motivated it was the desire for a purer and more distinctly Jahweh worship.

4. Sacrifice. The law of sacrifice in Deuteronomy is simple and strict. There is no question at all of its cessation. But the offering of sacrifice is to be controlled; it is not to be offered "in every place that thou seest" (12:13;), but only at the chosen sanctuary of Jahweh. In the earlier period the offering of sacrifice had not been limited to one place, but had been offered at various shrines where Jahweh had manifested Himself to their fathers. The J E writers had raised no objection to sacrifice at such shrines. But this new law of sacrifice is necessitated by the law of a single sanctuary. If there was but one place where Jahweh could be acceptably worshipped, then it followed that there was only one place where sacrifice, the main rite in the worship, could be legitimately offered. And since there was but one priesthood which officiated at the chosen sanctuary, all sacrifices must be brought thither. Therefore, "unto the place which Jahweh Your God shall choose----- thither ye shall bring your offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and the heave-offering of your hand, and your vows and your free-will offerings,

and the firstlings of your herd and flock; and there ye shall eat before Jahweh your God"(12:4ff;). By this law both the place and the kind of offerings are prescribed. The flesh and the blood of the burnt-offerings are to be consumed on the altar(12:27;). The social element in sacrifice is emphasized. The presentation of offerings to Jahweh is to be an occasion of great joy in which all classes in the community are to participate(12:12;).

Here again old custom and usage were modified. In the early period the slaughter of animals for meat and for sacrifice were synonymous, for the killing of an animal had been regarded as an act of sacrifice. "The blood and fat at least were given to the Deity. It was easy to enforce this law when there were many local sanctuaries and when animals were rarely killed for food except at the religious festivals."¹⁴ The reformers saw how the abolition of the local sanctuaries affected this ancient usage. No longer was it permissible to
 a kill an animal at the local sanctuary. This problem was solved by the separation of secular slaughter and sacrifice. It was permitted to kill animals for food anywhere, but the eating of the blood was prohibited. The law governing the tithes was similarly modified. Where the distance from the central sanctuary was so great that the tithes could not be easily brought to it, permission was given to turn the tithes into money with which to buy other sacrificial materials at the sanctuary for presentation to Jahweh.

It will be seen, then, that the Deuteronomists made very few changes in the laws respecting sacrifice. What changes they made were necessitated by the abolition of the local sanctuaries and the local priests. The sacrifices were offerings to Jahweh through which the worshipper expressed his devotion to God. And the offering of sacrifice was to be an occasion of great joy. "And there ye shall eat before Jahweh your God, and ye shall rejoice in all your undertakings, ye and your household, in which Jahweh thy God has blessed thee"(12:7;)

5. The Religious Festivals. The provision of the primitive codes for three

¹⁴Kent: Israel's Laws And Legal Precedents, p.213.

annual festivals are retained, with some modifications, in Deuteronomy, but, like all other acts of worship, they are to be celebrated at the central sanctuary. There is evidence of the denaturalization of the festivals. Just as the J E writers sought to eliminate the heathen ideas associated with the local sanctuaries by reinterpreting them, so, the Deuteronomists, by a reinterpretation of the ancient festivals, sought to purge them of all naturalistic elements and impart to them a more spiritual and ethical character. The festivals are not introduced as something new, but a new motive for their observance is injected; the motive is historical rather than naturalistic.

In the book of Exodus the Passover is associated with the deliverance from Egypt(cf.ch.12), and chap. 34:25b; gives directions for the disposal of the Passover lamb. But it is certain that it was a very ancient feast, ante-dating the Exodus. Ancient tradition assumes that the Passover was celebrated in pre-Mosaic days. It is assumed that it was for the purpose of celebrating this long-established feast in the wilderness that Moses demanded that Pharaoh let Israel go. It was in all probability a spring festival. The Hebrews after their settlement in Canaan found the Canaanites celebrating a corresponding spring festival. This they adopted. But instead of abandoning the old spring festival of nomadic days, they combined it with the new agricultural festival of the Canaanites. "Such a fusion was in time natural, for both apparently represent the primitive Semitic spring festival, the one, as it was observed by the agricultural Canaanites, and the other by the nomadic ancestors of the Hebrews."¹⁵ The feast of Unleavened Bread is thought to have been a memorial to the nomad period of Israel, when in Bedawin fashion they ate unleavened bread. But among the Canaanites it was probably the first of their harvest festivals, which celebrated the reaping of the firstfruits of the land. " It would appear that during this busy first week of harvest the people had no time or desire to await the slow working of the leaven, but gladly ate the bread made quickly from the unleavened

¹⁵Kent: Israel's Laws And Legal Precedents, p.259.

dough(cf.Gen.18:6; 19:3; Jos.5:11;). Naturally this custom grew into a fixed institution."¹⁶

In the course of time the original idea connected with the spring festival was lost sight of, and this enabled the prophetic interpreters to give it a new and higher significance by associating it with the deliverance from Egypt. Both the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are connected with the Exodus by J(cf.Ex.12:21ff; 34:18;), but it is in Deuteronomy that the significance of this is clearly stated. The joy of the feast is the joy of thanksgiving, not of those who bear the first ripe sheaf of grain to the sanctuary of the local deity, but of those who by a mighty act of deliverance on the part of their God were made a free people. The unleavened bread is "the bread of affliction," a memorial of the cruel servitude of Egypt(Deut.16:1,3;). "Pesach," says Dr.Welch, "is Israel's festival in honor of Israel's God. It must be celebrated in a month which recalls the nation's birth, and must be celebrated at a sanctuary which has associations only with the God of Israel. It must be observed after strict Israelite ritual to keep it free from the danger of heathen contamination."¹⁷ Such an aim clearly indicates the influence of the prophetic idealism. For,as Dr. Welch says, the purpose of the law is "Jahwism versus Baalism. Pesach is and must remain Israelite."¹⁸

Deuteronomy retains two other festivals, both of which are agricultural, but with more specific and extensive directions as to the manner of their observance. The primitive code required that a festival be celebrated to observe the end of the grain harvest(Ex.23:16; 34:22;). No particular date is fixed, and in Deuteronomy the time of celebration is determined by the ripening of the grain. The D code, however, stipulated that it is to be held seven weeks ^fafter the beginning of the harvest, and at the chosen sanctuary of Jahweh. The Feast of Ingathering, which according to Ex.23:16; 34:22; was to be observed at the end of the year after all the fruits of the field had been gathered in is the second

¹⁶Kent: Israel's Laws And Legal Precedents, p.259.

¹⁷The Code Of Deuteronomy, p.64ff.

¹⁸Ibid, p.70.

of the two. This festival, as I have attempted to show in another connection probably goes back to the gathering in of the date harvest from the oases by the nomadic ancestors of the Hebrews. It was given an agricultural significance after the settlement. Deuteronomy fixes no particular date for the celebration of this festival beyond requiring that it shall be kept seven days after the products of the threshing floor and the wine-press have been gathered in. Both of these festivals were to be occasions of great rejoicing and of thanksgiving to Jahweh, "because Jahweh thy God will bless thee in all thine increase and in all the work of thy hands, and thou shalt be altogether joyful." All classes are to participate in this rejoicing, and offerings are to be made to Jahweh in proportion as He hath blessed them(cf. Deut. 16:9-17;).

The centralization of worship, and the requirement that the festivals be celebrated at the chosen sanctuary, with the attendance of all males required three times a year, created many difficulties. With the feasts transferred from the local to one central sanctuary it became problematical as to whether the feast would retain its original character. And since the harvest matured in different parts of the land at widely separated dates, it was a question whether the feasts could be any longer connected with the harvest. Such separation of the festivals from their original occasion would be encouraged by the tendency which had become manifest, that of associating the feasts more and more with historical events, and the consequent supplanting of the natural by and historical interpretation. That the reformers were alive to the consequences of the new law is indicated by the provision made for the conversion of tithes into money, with which such sacrificial materials as the worshipper desired to offer to Jahweh could be purchased. Everything was made subordinate to their great end. They aimed at a regulated worship, a worship denaturalized and purged of heathen ideas and customs, unified and expressing the true devotion of the nation to its God. Hence, the feasts which had been celebrated locally and at different dates throughout the land, became great national festi-

als celebrated at the central sanctuary at a given time and participated in by all classes of the nation. The spirit which animated the celebration was that of thanksgiving to God for deliverance in the past and for provision for present needs. Such a motive would serve to impress more and more upon the people a sense of their dependence upon Jahweh and of their obligations to Him. To have a whole nation turn aside at periodic times from all the secular callings and tasks of life, to call to remembrance the loving-kindness of God, and to rejoice before Him, is an end devoutly to be wished in the life of any nation. It carried with it great possibilities of ~~of~~ social, ethical, and religious development. The prophets had denounced the festivals, and some modern scholars have interpreted their utterances as an absolute rejection of the whole system of worship. But in my judgment the Deuteronomists more correctly interpreted the attitude of the prophets when they retained the rite of sacrifice and the great religious festivals as part of Israel's religion. Sacrificial offerings and religious festivals, when freed from all heathen associations and motivated by the right spirit, could be made to serve worthy ends in the religious life of the Hebrew people. The prophetic reformers saw that the religious value of the cultus was, that it furnished the worshipper with a means of communication with his God. Through its sacrificial rites he could acknowledge his dependence upon and his sense of gratitude to Him who is the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and surely these are saving graces! Through the sacred rites of the cultus the pious worshipper could express his adoration and praise of Jahweh; and the recurring festivals emphasized the happy and joyous character of Israel's religion.

The Book of Deuteronomy, then, was the outcome of an attempt to give reality to the teachings of the prophets. It was, as Dr. Driver has well said, "a great manifesto against the dominant tendencies of the time.-----It was an endeavor to realize in practice the ideals of the prophets, especially of Hosea and Isaiah, to transform the Judah demoralised by Manasseh into the

holy nation pictured in Isaiah's vision, and to awaken in it that devotion to God and love for man which Hosea had declared to be the first of human duties. In setting forth these truths the author-----dilates upon the claims which Jehovah has upon the Israelites' allegiance, and seeks by ever appealing to the most generous motives, to stir Israel's heart to respond with undivided loyalty and affection."¹⁹

The book of Deuteronomy is prophetic both in origin and teaching, and it represents an enlarged edition of the Book of The Covenant; it is "a revival of the experience of Mosaic times, but intensified by the growth of the ideals during the intervening centuries."²⁰ Deuteronomy sheds an illuminating light upon the attitude of the prophetic party to the cultus and to the primitive codes. Kautzsch accuses those who deny that the prophets polemized against the cult per se of adopting the subterfuge of saying that they were only opposed to offerings presented hypocritically. But he is not above taking refuge in a subterfuge himself. When he affirms that "Jeremiah is as little acquainted as the prophets before him with a law book which issued in God's name statutes as to sacrifice,"²¹ he is at once confronted with the necessity of explaining the prophet's relation to Deuteronomy. This he does by saying that the book never sets itself to distinguish in principle the value and the necessity of sacrifice, but simply takes sacrifice for granted as a present fact and an old established custom. Now, if the "Book of the Law" was Deuteronomy, then Jeremiah was familiar with it. And Deuteronomy certainly "issued in God's name statutes as to sacrifice," and these were based on a very much older law book. The book of Deuteronomy affords us a key, therefore, to the interpretation which the men of the prophets' own age put upon their teaching as it related to the cult.

In this book, which is so permeated with the religious intensity and ethical

¹⁹Introduction To The Literature Of The Old Testament, p.89

²⁰Peritz: Old Testament History, p.206

²¹Religion Of Israel; Hastings Dictionary Bible, vol.V, p.685f.

idealism of the prophets, a large place is given to the cultus. But it is a cultus regulated and brought into harmony with prophetic ideals. The great prophetic principles of the unity and spirituality of Jahweh are emphasized. The motive of obedience to all of its laws is lifted to the high spiritual level of love; love for Jahweh is to be the spring of all their devotion to Him and their reverence for Him. True religion is manifested in serving God and the needy amongst men in the fear of Jahweh. Holiness is emphasized throughout the book, but it is something more and higher than ritual holiness; it is kindness to the poor, justice to the ~~hierarchy~~ ^{hiring}ling and the slave; and the inclusion of all classes in celebration of the sacred festivals at the chosen sanctuary. In the interests of purity of worship the priesthood is limited exclusively to one class of men, and distinction is made between prophets who speak with divine authority, and the false heathen prophets. "Religion is felt to be the basis of morality and of all social order, and therefore, even in the legislation proper(12-28), to say nothing of the fine hortatory introduction (5-11), its claims and nature are presented first."²² But with all its emphasis is on the ethical requirements of Jahweh, and these are always in the forefront, Deuteronomy still retains the cultus without being conscious of any conflict between it and the high ideals of the great prophets, who had rejected the popular worship and urged the demands of Jahweh for social righteousness and a more spiritual worship. But the prophets were no mere dreamers, they were practical idealists. "When the practical side was considered, it became clear that a purely ethical and spiritual religion without external worship proved too exacting for the people and required too much concentrated spiritual endeavor. The cult was necessary, and for this not only a stated place, a sanctuary, but also certain rules and regulations, rites, and ceremonies were needed. Only this worship must be pure, wholehearted, and sincere, based on a true moral life, and free from all impure heathen elements. Thus, those men who had

²²McFadyen: Introduction To The Old Testament, p.60.

the interest of true religion at heart and who insisted on the prophetic interpretation of it, were convinced that the great end they had in view could be gained not by putting away all external forms of religion, but by purging, regulating, spiritualizing them."²³

The book of Deuteronomy, therefore, represents a later age's view of what the prophets contended for in respect to the cultus- a worship refined and moralized, inspired by ethical motives, and truly expressive of the unique character of Jahweh and of the unique relation which He sustained to Israel. Deuteronomy is sometimes spoken of as "a compromise between the ideals of Hosea and Isaiah and the priestly establishment, an attempt to attain the moral ideals of the prophets without abandoning the institution of sacrifice and all that it implied."²⁴

But to speak of such compromise is to assume that the prophets were uncompromisingly opposed to all ceremonial in religion, an assumption I am unwilling to grant. At anyrate, the Deuteronomists did not so interpret the prophets. Where the truly religious spirit was present and expressed itself in the rites and forms of worship, the ceremonial had a proper place in the religion of Israel. "Because they knew how much the sacrificial worship meant for the life of their nation, they could not leave aside the needs which it satisfied, since they knew that the sure outcome of their neglect would be that the abuses connected with it must continue. The inarticulate common soul of

the people had no other way in which ~~it~~ express itself except through its religious ritual."²⁵ The book of Deuteronomy rather represents a blending of the ideals of the prophets with the precepts of the priests in the interest of a purer worship; true religion is shown to ^{be} more than ritual. The primary requirement of the law of Deuteronomy is, that Israel shall be loyal to Jahweh: "Hear O Israel, Jahweh our God is one Jahweh, and thou shalt love Jahweh thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might"(6:4f;)."Deuteronomy,"

says Dr. Welch, " is the effort to remold the national life and the national

²³Bewer: Literature Of The Old Testament, p.123.

²⁴Oesterly And Robinson: Hebrew Religion, p.213.

²⁵Welch: Religion Of Israel Under The Kingdom, p.195.

institutions in order to make these the worthy means by which men might express the will and nature of their God- a will and nature which the framers of the code have learned to know better through the prophetic teaching."²⁶

The view is expressed by some scholars that the promulgation of the laws of Deuteronomy was a distinct loss rather than a gain to Hebrew religion. The adoption of the book of the law as a final and authoritative code of religious usage marked the end, it is said, of the free spontaneous spirit which had been characteristic of Hebrew religion. "Up to this point Israel had been under the guidance of the Spirit. She had her laws and customs, but she had her prophets as well who spoke with the living voice. From henceforth her religion became more and more that of a book of laws, until it reached that legalism and literalism which called forth the warning, 'The letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life'."²⁷ I do not question the general truth of this statement. With the publication of Deuteronomy Israel's religion became the religion of a book. Every act of worship was regulated by law, and regulated worship is not without its dangers to the free spirit of religion. But even so, are we to assume that there was nothing of divine guidance in the preparation of Deuteronomy? or that the reformers were unable to foresee the risks they took in casting prophetic religion into the mould of legalism? What other alternative was left to them? Only a purely spiritual religion without rite or symbol, which, as I have already shown, was out of the question. Now, while Jahweh worship in Deuteronomy is in a very real sense a spiritual worship, since it is motivated by great spiritual principles and looks to great ethical ends, yet it is not a formless worship; it gave a place, though not a large place, to priestly regulations, burnt-offerings, and sacrifices. But when it is affirmed that from the time of Deuteronomy on there was an increasing emphasis on the ritual of worship, it is forgotten that ⁱⁿ the pre-Deuteronomic period the emphasis in the religion of the Israelites was wholly on the ritual of worship, and it was that which

²⁶Religion Of Israel Under The Kingdom, p.197.

²⁷Peritz: Old Testament History, p.207.

drew the fire of the prophets. It is more true to say that from the time of Deuteronomy on the emphasis was on a worship that was pure and sincere, based on a true moral life, and purged of all heathen impurities. The law of Deuteronomy was based on prophetic teaching, and it was designed to purify and spiritualize the worship of Jahweh. It must be acknowledged, however, that the aim of the reformers was not wholly realized, and as a result it became an occasion of legalism in religion. But the error into which some fall is that of failing to distinguish between the aims of the reformers and their realization. "How do ye say," asks Jeremiah, "We are wise, and the law of Jahweh is with us? But, behold the false pen of the scribes hath made it a falsehood." (Jer.8:8;).

CHAPTER VII
THE CULTUS OF THE POST-EXILIC PERIOD
(Ezekiel And The Holiness Code)

There is sufficient evidence in the writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel to warrant the conclusion that the prophetic program of reform was not a complete success. The closing decade of Judah's history witnessed a relapse to the evil conditions that had prevailed prior to the reform. The very law which had been designed to end the abuses gave rise to other evils. The people, instead of giving Jahweh the love and devotion of their hearts as Deuteronomy had enjoined, put a false and superstitious trust in the sanctuary itself. There is no better illustration than this of how the whole aim of the reformers was missed. The spiritual and ethical sanctions of the ritual were ignored; the ethical righteousness of the prophets gave place to ceremonial righteousness as a rule of life. The reform had failed to effect the transformation for which the prophetic party had hoped. The moral and religious life of the people had again sunk to a low level. Ezekiel speaks of the introduction of idolatry and foreign cults into the temple (ch. 8), and he accuses the priests of failing to distinguish between the clean and the unclean (22:26;). Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel predicted the end of the nation, nothing could save it; the temple in which they vainly trusted would be destroyed. These predictions were literally fulfilled. Jerusalem fell, the temple was destroyed, and the people carried off into captivity. Israel ceased to be an nation.

The significance of the Babylonian Exile is of the greatest importance for the religion of Israel. It accomplished that which the reform of Josiah had failed to accomplish, the abolition of idolatry. The disaster which had overwhelmed the nation was attributed to idolatry by the prophets (cf. Ezek. 6:11-14; 8:1-18;). And when the blow fell the impotence of the idols was manifested. The religion of Israel was faced with extinction in this crisis, but it was because of the work of Jeremiah and Ezekiel that it was saved from this fate.

When Israel was carried away from the land over which Jahweh had jurisdiction it was confronted with either worshipping the god of the new land into which it had come, or of rising to a conception of Jahweh as the sovereign God of all lands and nations. That this higher conception was reached is manifest in the literature of the period, but it was due entirely to the teaching of the prophets. "Those Jews who went into exile believing that they were the people of a conquered god, were almost certain to accept the worship of the stronger gods of Babylon, and to allow themselves to be absorbed into the people by whom they were surrounded. Those ~~who~~ on the other hand, who accepted the teaching of the prophets, saw in what was happening proof of Jahweh's power and not of His weakness. They believed that He Himself had brought upon His people the evil which had happened to them.-----They were confident that it would come to an end after it had served its purpose. Thus they were able to endure their calamity and retain their faith and look forward with hope to the future."¹ Deutero-Isaiah proclaimed a pure monotheism. Jahweh is the only e God, the First and the Last, the Creator of the universe, the God of universal history, the Self-Sustained and the Sustainer of all things(cf.Isa.chs.40-42). The great prophet of the exile pured scorn upon the idols; they were non-entit- e ies, having no real existence. He looks at them in the light of the transcend- e nt Jahweh, and he points out the shame and the folly and the stupidity and the blindness of all idol worshippers(40:18-20; 41:6,7; 44:9-20; 46:1,2,5-7).

After the return from captivity idolatry had no place in the cultus of the Jews.

The process of priestly syncretism which began with the attempt of the Deuteronomists to embody prophetic ideals in the ritual was carried still further during the exile. One writer speaking of post-exilic religion says: "To the prophet's watchword; Righteousness the end, the priests had responded with the compromise; Worship the means. Thus conceived, worship entered upon a greater development than ever; prophecy itself soon became absorbed in it. The ritual

¹Stevenson: Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Their Lives And Books, p.50

grew to proportions of which the priests themselves had never dreamed."² But the religion of the Jews of the restoration, while not a purely spiritual religion, was no ~~an~~ empty cult of sacrificial ritual, it was a syncretism of priestly and prophetic elements. The process of syncretism was furthered rather than hindered by the prophets of this period, who saw in it the only solution of the religious problems created by the exile. The outstanding figure in this movement is that of Ezekiel, who is a fitting representative of the twofold character of the religion of this period, for he was both prophet and priest.³

1. EZEKIEL

Ezekiel was a true prophet of Jahweh, and in all of his teaching the ethical is to the forefront. He was no less severe in his denunciation of social injustice than Isaiah, or of gross immorality than Hosea(cf.Ez.22:6-12;) He proclaimed the prophetic doctrine that sin involves suffering and death(33:15;). He added his voice to that of Jeremiah in declaring that trust in the temple cannot save Israel, for Jahweh had even then abandoned it(10:1ff;). The restoration of Israel did not depend on the setting up of an elaborate system of worship, but upon the sovereign grace of God; the conditions of restoration were moral and spiritual rather than ceremonial. The ultimate ground of the sinner's salvation and of his restoration to the grace and fellowship of God is the essential holiness of God Himself. Evil in the life of those who profess to be His people casts reproach upon the holy character of Jahweh, a reproach which can only be removed by the removal of that which occasions it(36:21-24;). But Israel's sin was deep-rooted and of long standing, it therefore required radical treatment to remove it. How was this to be done? By the offering of propitiatory sacrifices? No! The answer to this question is given in what may well be called the Gospel according to Ezekiel, in which the prophetic emphasis on the inward character of true religion rings true(cf.36:21-38;). It sets forth the one indispensable condition upon which Israel will be restored.

²Mann: The Evolution Of A Great Literature, p.196.

³Cf. Loisy: The Religion Of Israel, p.195f.

The emphasis that is put on the need of an inner transformation is a further development of Jeremiah's teaching and an anticipation of the teaching of Jesus on the need of regeneration. "It contains the clearest and most comprehensive statement of the process of redemption to be found in the whole book."⁴

The question has been raised as to whether the prophet speaks of legal or moral cleansing. No doubt, priest that he was, he had in mind the priestly ritual of cleansing(cf.Num.19:9-18;). But when 36:25; is taken in its context it certainly seems that the prophet had inner moral cleansing in mind. Sin had been the cause of the exile; the pre-requisite of return was the forgiveness of sin. Jeremiah warned Judah that its only security lay in moral renovation. And Ezekiel saw that moral renovation alone could guarantee the permanency of Israel's restoration. Jeremiah had come to regard the people as incapable of repentance(Jer.13:23; cf.Hos.11:7;), and Ezekiel saw that God must take the initiative in Israel's restoration since He alone could accomplish it. "The prophets before him had maintained that repentance must precede forgiveness and restoration. Ezekiel believed that we love God because He first loved us."⁵ The emphasis which the prophet put upon the ethical and inward character of true religion must be kept in mind if a just interpretation is to be made of his priestly program.

Ezekiel, though he manifests the true spirit of prophecy, nevertheless shows an interest in ceremonial that sharply differentiates him from his predecessors. This is to be accounted for in part by the fact that he was a priest as well as a prophet. His priestly training and interests are evident in chs.40-48, where we have his vision of the Messianic age in terms of the ritual. But this section "is not a description of the way by which salvation is to be attained, it is a picture of salvation already realized and a people saved. The sacrifices and ministrations are not performed in order to obtain redemption, but at the most to conserve it."⁶ The temple as the habitation of the most high God

⁴Cf. Skinner: Book Of Ezekiel, pp.333ff.

⁵Bewer: Literature Of The Old Testament, p.177.

⁶Davidson: The Book Of Ezekiel, p.290

must be protected from all profanation. Hence, the location and the layout was so designed as to prevent any such profanation in the future as had defiled the sanctuary in the past.

The distinction between the sacred and the profane is further emphasized by the lines drawn between the priesthood and the laity. The sons of Zadok alone are to be priests; the Levites were to perform the menial tasks formerly discharged by the temple slaves, who are now banished from the temple. Special care is taken to preserve the sanctity of the priesthood and to purge them of anything that might profane the approach to the Holy One.

A large and important place is given to sacrifice in Ezekiel's system. The sin-offering is emphasized, it had atoning efficacy; through it the sanctuary was cleansed and Jahweh was propitiated. Provision was made for the burnt-offering, and for the continual burnt-offering to be presented every morning. Certain portions of the sacrifices became the property of the priests, and special places were provided for the cooking and eating of the offerings that may be eaten by the priests and worshippers.

Such was the ceremonialism of the prophet-priest Ezekiel. It was an ideal system designed to maintain an ideal relation between Jahweh and Israel. But because it later developed into a legalism which threatened the personal element in religion and intimate personal fellowship with God, Ezekiel has been called the father of Judaism, a charge which I cannot concede to be quite fair to the prophet. It is the vision of an idealist who did not see the dangers that later developed because his plan presupposed a people morally regenerated by the grace of God and restored to fellowship with Him. "In his view Israel's development reaches its culmination in the restoration itself, and the regeneration of the people accompanying it(cf. Isa. 60). The ritual observances which he enjoins are not the 'statutes of life' elsewhere spoken of. These statutes are the moral requirements of the Decalogue, practically carried out so as to ex-

clude idolatry and the impurities often referred to(ch.22); and the fulfilment of these statutes is ensured by the moral regeneration wrought by God upon the people(11:18-20; 16:60-63; 36:25ff;)."7

The work of Ezekiel is a further illustration of the tendency of the later period to embody prophetic ideas in the ritual in order to refine and moralize the worship of Jahweh. "Ezekiel "sought to supply the spirit of religion with a body. The spirit was an expression of the holiness of God, the body was a ritual of holiness, and in each case 'holiness' reverted to its original suggestion of 'separateness,' and thus the whole concept was, it cannot be denied, materialized."8 But was it? 'Holiness' was something far greater than a relational term with Ezekiel, it stood for the essential Deity of ~~of~~ Jahweh; it was a synonym of His transcendent glory and majesty, for justice and righteousness; it called forth awe and reverence. But it had been profaned by the sins of His people, and it will be again manifested in judgment. It is a fair question to ask whether the distinction made by modern scholars between moral and ceremonial uncleanness existed in the mind of Ezekiel. "All sins," says Dr.A.B. Davidson, moral as we name them, and others which we call ceremonial, are named uncleanness in the law and in Ezekiel.-----Our modern distinction of ceremonial and moral is not one known to the law."9 And while it is true that Ezekiel emphasized the transcendence of God, he also taught that He sustained an intimate relation to His people. He did not seek to comfort the people or inspire hope in them with the thought of a God who was afar off, so apart from them that fellowship with Him was an impossibility. It were strange comfort indeed! But like Jeremiah, Ezekiel taught that each individual sustained a definite personal relation to Jahweh and the freedom and independence of the individual soul through its immediate relation to God(cf.ch. 18, 33:1-20;). The nearness of Jahweh to His people and the intimacy of the relation between Him and them, is beautifully expressed under the figure of a

7Davidson: The Book Of Ezekiel, liii.

8Ridgley: Jewish Ethical Idealism, p.55.

9Old Testament Theology, p.348f.

shepherd and his flock(ch.34). "And they shall know that I, Jahweh their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord Jahweh. And ye my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord Jahweh"(34:30f;). In my judgment, the resultant legalism was due more to a perversion rather than a development of Ezekiel's thought. Such a system as that represented by later Judaism was not in the mind of the prophet. His intent was not to glorify ceremonialism, but to conserve the spiritual and the ethical through ritual forms. If he seems to place undue stress on physical perfection it was because, with his high conception of the absolute perfection of God, he demanded perfection in everything that came into relation to Him. There is no virtue in slovenly worship.

Ezekiel did not regard the cultus as an end in itself, it was a means to an end; it was not to be a substitute for religion, but a means by which continual fellowship with God, which is religion, could be maintained. The cultus of pre-exilic days was regarded as an end in itself; religion consisted in the discharge of the ritual requirements, and it was motivated by a materialistic conception of Jahweh. The cultus of Ezekiel has moved far away from that. The prophet had declared the imperativeness of regeneration. But that which God declared to be essential to Israel's restoration He Himself would perform. Ezekiel was at once confronted with the problem as to how this fellowship was to be maintained and regulated, and his solution of the problem is stated in terms of the ritual of worship. Through the cultus continual fellowship with God could and would be maintained. "Ezekiel was preeminently the organizer who, in the supreme crisis of Judaism, adopting the great doctrines of his prophetic predecessors, developed a creed and a definite plan which met the needs of the situation. His emphasis upon details and ritual was not only in accord with the spirit of the age, but also furnished a concrete program which could be understood and adopted by the masses who were groping in the darkness."¹⁰

¹⁰Kent: Sermons Epistles And Apocalypses Of Israel's Prophets, p.25.

In Ezekiel, then, we have the prophet turned priestly law-giver. But he did not deviate from the great prophetic aim as it related to the cultus, for the end which he sought was the spiritual and ethical perfection of the people of God living in fellowship with Him. He did, however, have a profound influence on the future of Israel's religion. It gave a further impetus to the process of priestly syncretism. But connection with former prophetic thought is maintained through the emphasis placed on the holiness of God, and by the insistence that the relation of the new Israel to Jahweh rested upon a moral basis.¹¹

2. THE HOLINESS CODE

Another factor which not only shows the definite trend towards the embodiment of prophetic ideas in a priestly syncretism, but which also must have greatly influenced the prophets of the restoration period, is the legal section in the book of Leviticus, chapters 17-26, commonly referred to as "The Holiness Code." It is not my purpose to discuss this code beyond showing how it embodied and conserved the fundamental ideas of prophetic teaching, and united the ethical requirements of religion with the externals of worship.

The relation of Ezekiel to the Holiness Code has been much discussed. The many resemblances between Ezekiel and these chapters have led some scholars to regard Ezekiel as their author. In phraseology, conception, and purpose, there is a very close affinity between the two.¹² But there are also striking differences. That Ezekiel and the H Code have a vital connection is generally agreed. They both originated within the same circles, and Ezekiel was acquainted with the greater part of the laws of the code, "which he regarded as an authoritative basis of moral and religious life."¹³ The fact that Ezekiel speaks of burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, meal-offerings, sin-offerings, and trespass-offerings, is no more evidence that he was the author of the H Code than chaps. 40-48 are that he was founder of the temple. "The affinities in language between Ezekiel and the ritual law arise from the fact that the writers move among the same

¹¹Cf. Bennett: Religion Of The Post-Exilic Prophets, pp.28-34.

¹²Cf. Driver: Literature Of The Old Testament, pp.146-148.

¹³Driver: *ibid*, p.146.

class of conceptions, and, in Ezekiel's case, at least, from the fact that these conceptions have long ago created for themselves a distinct phraseology."¹⁴ We arrive, then, at the following conclusions on this question: (1) the differences between the priestly program and Ezekiel and the H Code are such that they preclude any belief in a common authorship; (2) the phraseological resemblances are due to identity of interest and point of view; and (3), Ezekiel was familiar with the laws of the H Code.

The dominant idea of H, as in Ezekiel, is the holiness of God. Hence the designation of these chapters as the "Laws of Holiness." They are not all new laws, the archaic character of many of them is evident. In these chapters we have the codification of laws which had operated in priestly circles for many centuries previously. And though they are more priestly than the laws of Deuteronomy, yet they show a marked affinity to Deuteronomy in the stress that is laid on the duties of humanity and charity to the Israelite and the stranger.

A brief analysis of these chapters will reveal their priestly character and origin, but it will also reveal the embodiment within the code of prophetic ideas and ideals.

1. Laws regulating sacrifice. The slaughter of domestic animals is prohibited unless presented to Jahweh. The law of Deuteronomy which differentiated between the slaughter of animals for food and those killed as sacrifices is thus modified(cf. Deut. 12:15, 20-28;). The sacrifice must be offered to Jahweh alone, to whom the blood is sacred and must not be eaten. In the case of animals not offered in sacrifice the blood must be pured on the ground(ch. 17). ©

2. Laws relating to the holiness of the priest and the perfection of the sacrifice. The emphasis in this connection is on ceremonial holiness, although at times moral uncleanness seems to be implied. The priest is to guard against physical defilement which would disqualify him from ministering before the altar. No person who suffers from any physical defect or deformity may minister unto

¹⁴Davidson: The Book Of Ezekiel, p.liv. Cf. Kent: Israel's Laws And Legal Precedents, p.38.

Jahweh. Likewise the animals which are offered in sacrifice must be without blemish(chs.21,22).

3. Calendar of sacred seasons. Laws are given regulating the observance of the Sabbath, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths(23:1-3, 9-20, 39-44;). The festivals, which in the pre-exilic period had been eucharistic in character, have taken on a more solemn aspect, and guilt- and sin-offerings are presented in connection with their observance. They have also become more detached from their agricultural connection. In the case of the Feast of Tabernacles the agricultural significance is altogether lost in the H Code, it is made a memorial of the Exodus from Egypt and a definite date is set for its observance.

The term 'holiness' in these laws refers to the fulfilment of ceremonial obligations and abstinence from anything that would unfit one by defilement from serving before the altar. But this is not the only sense in which 'holiness' is used. It consists also of moral cleansing. Such are the laws relating to sexual intercourse. Crimes against morality and common decency, such as adultery, illicit intercourse, incest, sodomy, bestiality, and prostitution, are capital offences which, in most cases, are punishable with death(cf. chs. 18,20). These laws deal with gross violations of the law of chastity, and their purpose was to preserve the sexual purity of the people; for nothing so impure and weakens the moral fibre of a people like open and general violation of the laws of chastity and social purity. The laws are prefaced with a warning not to do after the doings of Egypt or Canaan(18:1-3;), and in ch.20 they are closely related to the laws prohibiting heathen worship, sorcery, and divination. We have seen that unchastity, debauchery, and prostitution were elements of heathen worship to which Israel all too readily gave way in the pre-exilic period. The prophets deplored the decay of private and public morals, and denounced the gross immoralities and unchastity of Israel. The tragedy of Hosea's life

was due to the unchastity of his wife, which in turn was no doubt due to the immoral practices carried on in the name of religion(cf.Hos.4:14; I Kings 14:23). The moral perversion of the age is clearly indicated by the use of the terms qadesh($\omega\dot{\gamma}P$), and qedeshah($\pi\omega\dot{\gamma}P$), sacred or holy, for temple prostitutes. The prophets saw that such wide-spread and flagrant violation of the laws of chastity could have but one end- the disintegration of the whole life of the nation. The integrity and purity of the family life was threatened with destruction, and with it the life of the nation itself. These laws, therefore, manifest the spirit of the prophets.

The author or authors of the "Laws of Holiness" are as much concerned for the moral perfection of the people as they are for the holiness of the priests. And in the laws of chastity they sought to preserve or inculcate that which the prophets had urged- sexual purity. Promiscuous sexual intercourse and sexual enormities, and the heathen customs of which they were the fruit, are strictly forbidden on pain of death. In this the influence of prophetic idealism is manifested. There is no longer any place in the cultus of Israel for the licentious and degrading rites which accompanied it in the pre-exilic period. But not only is the worship purged of sexual license, personal chastity is held up to the people as a great and worthy ideal; illicit intercourse is branded as a crime, and only those sexual relations which are natural and normal are permitted.

It is in the insistence of these laws upon obedience to the moral requirements of the religion of Jahweh that the influence of prophetic idealism is most clearly seen. Nowhere in the Old Testament is the ethical emphasis stronger than in these laws, whose idea of holiness has been declared to be primarily ceremonial and material. The prophets denounced those who thought that sacrifice was all that was necessary to gain the favor of Jahweh, people who thought that God expected nothing else, and that compliance with the requirements of the cultus without any regard for or reference to moral behaviour constituted religion(cf.

Amos 4:4,5; Hos.2:8ff; Isa.1:10ff; Mic.6:6f; Jer.7:1ff;). The prophets had always shown great concern for the rights of the poor and the weak, those whose condition made them an easy prey for the rich and powerful. The constant demand of the prophets was for justice and equity for all classes of the nation, and kindly consideration for the more unfortunate of the people. And in ringing uncompromising tones they denounced the greed and tyranny of the rich and their relentless oppression of the poor. They who violated the elementary principles of human fellowship could have no fellowship with God. Religion must express itself in right ethical conduct, for it is this which validates the religious pretensions of the worshipper. Jeremiah, comparing Jehoiakim with his father Josiah, asks, "Did not thy father do justice and righteousness? He judged the cause of the poor and the needy, then it was well with him." And then, very significantly he asks, "Was not this to know me? says Jahweh." (22:15;). The author of the Holiness Code, like the Deuteronomists before them, had caught the spirit of the prophets and embodied it in their laws. Israel is to be holy because Jahweh their God is holy. But, though 'holiness' referred to ritual sanctity its end was ethical- social and moral purity and righteousness. Chapter 19 is no mere generalization of prophetic teaching. The very social sins against which the prophets inveighed are specifically mentioned: stealing, false-dealing, lying, oppression, robbery, defrauding, inhuman treatment of the unfortunate, discrimination in the administration of justice, hatred, vindictiveness, and commercial dishonesty, all of which are the fruits of a fundamentally wrong inner disposition of soul. Therefore, in order to right ethical living, it commands, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Jesus could think of no higher ideal to govern the relations of a man with his fellows than this; in it He declared, the whole of a man's ethical duties are summed up; it comprehends all morality and righteousness towards men, as the other great commandment which He took from Deuteronomy comprehends the whole of man's religious duties to God.

It is the idealism of the prophets that lifts this code of laws out of mere ceremonialism and imparts an ethical content to the idea of holiness. "Ye shall be holy; for I, Jahweh your God, am holy," is the keynote. But the perfection of God was to be reflected not only in a perfect ritual of worship, but also in the right relations of the worshipper to his fellows; not only in outward deeds but also in the inner disposition of the heart, for love is the fulfilling of the law. The priests gave the religion of Israel a body, and they strove for a beauty and a perfection in the body befitting that of Jahweh Himself. But they vitalized the body with the idealism of the prophets, so that in this code of ritual laws, imbedded in the very heart of the most ritualistic book of the Old Testament- Leviticus, the high-water mark of ethics in the Old Testament is reached.

As the inner disposition of a man's heart towards his neighbour motivates his dealings with him, so also it is in his relation to God. The H Code, like Deuteronomy, emphasizes obedience to the will of God(ch.26). The bitter experiences of the exile were the direct result of disobedience to the law of God. And the hope of the future depended upon obedience to all the divine requirements. The prophetic conception of the inwardness of true religion, the religion of the heart, is set forth in the emphasis placed upon repentance, the humbling of their uncircumcised hearts(26:40ff;).

The religious and ethical idealism of the prophets influenced the cultus, as it is reflected in the H Code, in two ways: (1) It was purged of all its heathen accretions. Every heathen element, custom, and superstition, was eliminated. And the whole purpose of the ritual was to guard the worship of Jahweh against heathen profanation or the introduction of anything into the worship that would reflect upon the Holy One of Israel. (2) The ceremonial was brought into relation with character and conduct. Holiness is something more than cultic purity. There is an aesthetic element in religion which manifests itself through the

ritual; and there is an ethical element in religion which manifests itself in right human conduct and relationships. This latter the prophets had insisted was primary. The priestly legislators made provision for it in the moral and social laws of the code. In the great command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," there surely lies implicit the belief that all the ceremonial observances were of secondary importance; that the worthiest expression of true religion is not through "churchly service, song, or psalm, or ritual grand," but in a loving, kindly consideration and respect for the rights of others; neither exalting our neighbour's rights above our own, nor seeking to advance our own interests at the expense of our neighbour. The prophets had proclaimed justice for all men. But this ritual code goes farther; it emphasizes not merely the duty of respect for the rights of others, it emphasizes the duty of love for others. For, as someone has well said, "We owe other people more than their rights, we owe them love."

CHAPTER XIII
THE CULTUS OF THE POST-EXILIC PERIOD-Contd.
(The Prophets Of The Restoration)

The attitude of the post-exilic prophets to the cultus is in many ways very different from that of the^{ir} predecessors. They laid greater stress upon the ceremonial; they inspired the people by their preaching to rebuild the temple; and they condemned the neglect of the worship. These prophets have, therefore, been regarded as very inferior to the pre-exilic prophets. But in order to be just to them and to fairly evaluate their work we must look at it in the light of the changes wrought by the exile, the influence of Ezekiel and the H Code, and of the immediate problems which confronted the prophets of this period.

The exile effected a fundamental transformation in the political, social, and religious life of the Hebrews. The monarchy disappeared and in its place there arose a priestly nobility with a high-priest at its head. The transition was made from the period of the prophets to that of the priests. The destruction of the temple had at one blow swept away all the means of approach to the divine Presence. Sacrifice could no longer be offered, the occupation of the priests who ministered in the temple was gone, and the sacred festivals could not be celebrated. But Jeremiah, with his doctrine of the new covenant and the inner character of true religion, had prepared the people for this eventuality (cf. Jer.31:33f;). The trusting soul separated from the external forms of wor- a
ship must more and more seek inner communion with God(cf.45:20;). But worship did not cease among the exiles. Those institutions and forms which were not dependent upon the temple were emphasized. Sabbath observance was stressed(cf. Isa.56:2,4,6; 58:13; 66:23;). Fasts took the place of feasts(Isa.58:3-5;), and resort was had to prayer. But there still lingered in the minds of the people the hope of the restoration of the temple worship(cf.Isa.43:22-24; 56:7;). The prophet Ezekiel had predicted the return of Israel to Jerusalem, but it would

be a new Israel that would return; a new community would inhabit Jerusalem in which neither crime nor injustice would have any place, therefore, there would be no need for a government. God will be Israel's Judge and Defender. And the constant occupation of the people will be the worship of God, through which the regenerated people will maintain fellowship with their God. Thus, Ezekiel had prepared a program to meet the changed conditions of the age. And when the restoration became an actual fact the prophets of the restoration period sought to give effect to the priestly program of Ezekiel. I shall now endeavor to show that they did this and why they did it.

1. The Temple. According to Ezra 1:5-11; the foundations of the temple were laid by Sheshbazzar two years after the return from the exile. But the prophetic writings of this period give a quite different picture. It is quite probable that only a very small number of exiles returned under Sheshbazzar.¹ The exiles manifested little disposition to return to ruined and poverty-stricken Judea. Babylonia offered them greater advantages and opportunities for material success than Jerusalem could offer(cf. Isa. ch. 55). A new generation had sprung up to whom Babylonia meant much more than Judea. Why, then, take the hazards of the perilous journey across the desert when nothing but poverty and hard toil awaited them? Consequently, only those in whose hearts the fires of devotion to Jahweh still burned returned to Jerusalem with the high resolve to build again the sanctuary of Jahweh. But the fires of devotion were soon quenched by the severe struggle against the hard conditions which confronted them. the work of rebuilding the temple was begun, not in the second year after the return, but in the eighteenth year. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah give us a picture of a people few in number(cf. Hag. 1:12, 14; 2:2; Zech. 8:6, 11f;), living under the most adverse conditions(Hag. 2:15-19;), which so discouraged them that they became indifferent to the work of rebuilding the sanctuary(Hag. 1:3ff;).

Conditions improved, however, and their numbers were increased by later return-

¹For a discussion of this problem see Smith: The Book Of The Twelve vol. II, pp. 198-221.

ing groups of exiles, prominent amongst whom were Zerubbabel and Jeshua(cf. Ezra 2:1ff;). New hope came to Jerusalem with these exiles.

The foundations of the temple were laid by Zerubbabel in 520 B.C., and the building was finished four years later, 516(cf.Zech.4:9; Ezra 6:14ff;). But the inspiration for this came from neither the increased numbers of the people nor from the improved conditions; it came from the preaching of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah(cf.Ezra 5:1ff;). Zerubbabel and Jeshua, representatives of the civil and religious life of the people, took the lead in the rebuilding of the temple, in which they were loyally supported by the prophets. Haggai and Zechariah, by their preaching, stirred the people out of their indifference and despondency to renewed and continued efforts, which culminated in the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of worship. Haggai chided the people with living in ceiled houses while the house of Jahweh lay in ruins. Such a condition was an insult to God and a reproach to the nation. The prophet's appeal was couched in plain terms. He rebuked the people for their weakness, declaring that their sufferings were a just retribution from God. And his appeal was all the more effective since it was directed to the common belief that adversity was a mark of divine displeasure. He called upon them to build the temple, not only because it would be a manifestation of their devotion to Jahweh, but it would ensure the return of more prosperous times. The temple would be a symbol of divine cleansing and of a return of the grace of God.

Haggai's contemporary, Zechariah, encouraged the people with similar assurances(1:12ff;). He too manifested an earnest desire for the rebuilding of the temple. And after it had been built there were practical problems in connection with the restored sanctuary with which he dealt(cf.3:1ff;). He sought to dispel the fears and doubts of the people, to awake them out of their apathy, and to create a spirit of hope and confidence that with the help of God every difficulty would be overcome. His purpose was to inspire the people to take up and

continue the work of reconstruction until Jerusalem had been rebuilt and again become the dwelling-place of Jahweh in the midst of His people. Zechariah centred great hopes in the restored sanctuary. The fulfilment of the Messianic hopes of the nation depended upon the willingness of the people to rebuild the temple. And central in his message was the thought that the new temple would become the centre of the Messianic age(cf.ch.8:8-13;).

Thus, the temple which the pre-exilic prophets had declared would be destroyed because of the many evils associated with it, was rebuilt "by the insistence of Haggai and Zechariah on the duty of rebuilding it, and their predictions of its future wealth and splendour."²

2. The Priesthood. According to Ezra 2:36-39; a very large number of the exiles who returned were priests and Levites. The growing importance of the priest is clearly evident. Deuteronomy had restricted the priesthood to the Levites; but Ezekiel restricted the priesthood to the family of Zadok, and he reduced the Levites to the rank of menials serving in the temple(cf.Ezek.ch.44). But this distinction did not become clear until after the restoration. There are passages(cf.Ezra 8:20; 10:5; Mal.3:3; the latter especially,)in which the titles seem to be used of the same person, as in Deuteronomy. Malachi speaks of the purifying of the sons of Levi in order that they might be qualified to present offerings unto Jahweh in righteousness. "Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto Jahweh, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years"(Mal.3:4;). But, on the other hand, there are passages which suggest that there was a movement away from the law of Deuteronomy towards the distinction of Ezekiel between priests and Levites. The priests were set in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses for the service of God in the temple, "as it is written in the book of Moses"(Ezra 6:18;). The reference to "the book of Moses" is to the P Code, in which the distinction between priests and Levites became fixed. But not only was distinction made between priests and Levites,

²Bennett: Religion Of The Post-Exilic Prophets, p.248

but a distinction was made within the priesthood itself. The beginnings of a priestly hierarchy is seen in the election of one of the priests to a place of prominence above his fellow priests. The high-priest Jeshua represents the polluted priests and people(Zech.3:1-9;); he is made the custodian of the crown, which later is to be placed on the head of Zerubbabel(Zech.6:11-13;); and his name is coupled with that of Zerubbabel, which may be taken as an indication of his importance in the restored community(Hag.1:1,12; 2:2,4;).

The prophet Ezekiel had laid down rules designed to preserve the sanctity of the priesthood, for they were held responsible for the sanctity of Jahweh. But the priests of the restoration had fallen into the evil ways of those whom the pre-exilic prophets had denounced. Malachi condemns the selfishness of the priests and their indifference to their priestly responsibilities, by which they profane the name of Jahweh among the Gentiles(2:5-9; 3:3;). These evils, he declares, will be corrected by a divine judgment, for the messenger of Jahweh shall come like a refiner's fire and purify the sons of Levi(3:1-4;). The priests derive their support from the tithes that are brought to the temple. But these had not been paid, and to withhold the tithes is to rob God(3:7-9;).

3. The Ritual. Shortly after the return to Jerusalem the altar of burnt-offering was set up on its ancient site and the offering of the daily sacrifice was renewed, if it had ever wholly ceased. The laws governing the offering of sacrifice were probably those of Deuteronomy. That which is offered to Jahweh must be the best of its kind, His demand is for perfection. Hence, Malachi severely condemned those who brought imperfect offerings, offerings that were altogether unworthy of Him to whom they were presented(Mal.1:7,8,12-14; 3:8;).

It will be seen from this brief survey that the prophets of the restoration not only emphasized the ceremonial, but actually took the lead in restoring the ritual of worship. Their predecessors had regarded the temple as an occasion of evil-doing which would involve the nation in disaster; they had denounced

the popular belief that the prosperity of the nation was the direct result of their munificence to Jahweh, who was well pleased with the multitude of their gifts. But the prophets of the restoration took an opposite view. The poverty of the people was due, they declared, to the displeasure of Jahweh at their neglect of His worship. "Because of my temple which lieth in ruins while ye are running each to his own house. Therefore for your sakes the heavens withhold the dew, and the earth withholdeth its fruit" etc. (Hag. 1:7f;). The pre-exilic prophets rejected the sacrifices; but Malachi berated the people because they did not offer their best and most perfect sacrifices to Jahweh. The work of the prophet had become priestly in character. Haggai's main concern was the rebuilding of the temple, for until that was done the people could not hope to enjoy the favor of Jahweh. Zechariah expressed a similar view, and throughout his prophecy priestly interests are prominent. Malachi emphasized the need of reform, both of the ritual and the priesthood.

How is this changed attitude to be explained? Does it mark a departure from the historic position of the early prophets? Is the prophet now more concerned with the ceremonial than with the ethical? Has the centre of gravity of Hebrew religion been shifted back from righteous conduct to ceremonial observance? These are questions raised by the attitude of these prophets to the cultus, and for which I shall attempt to find an answer.

The changed attitude to the cultus manifested by the prophets of the restoration must be regarded first of all in the light of the changed conditions of the post-exilic period. It is a principle of prophetic interpretation that when the prophet speaks it is always from his own historical position that he speaks, and that the substance of his prophecy is determined by the historical event or situation out of which it grew. Those who declare that true prophecy came to an end with Jeremiah overlook this principle, and, as a consequence, they narrow the meaning of the term 'prophet'. The men of this period, though not

so eminent as their predecessors, were just as truly the spokesmen of God. It is idle, as Dr.G.A.Smith points out, to sneer at Haggai's interpretation of the word of God "as only a call to hew wood and lay stone upon stone." Haggai "felt what the moment needed, and that," adds Dr. Smith, with true discernment of the prophetic function, "is the supreme mark of the prophet. Set a prophet there and what else could a prophet have done?-----What God's people themselves could do for themselves- that was what needed telling at the moment."³ The crises and problems to which the pre-exilic prophets had addressed themselves were now a thing of the past. The eighth and seventh century prophets preached to a prosperous but profligate age, and denounced the ethical and social evils of their time. They did not ask "Will a man rob God?" There was no necessity to ask such a question, for the people actually overdid it in their giving to God. Their condemnation was pronounced upon those who robbed their fellowmen. The temple constituted an entirely different problem for Jeremiah than it did for Haggai and Zechariah. In Jeremiah's day it was made a refuge for evil-doers and was therefore marked for destruction. The exile had completely changed the life of the people: politically, their national institutions had been swept away; socially, the people had been reduced to the direst poverty, the sharp distinctions between the rich and the poor no longer existed, and the social injustice against which Amos and Micah had inveighed had ceased to be; and religiously, there was a greater appreciation and more ready acceptance of the teaching of the earlier prophets, and idolatry and the heathen customs and practices which had drawn the fire of the prophets were no longer countenanced. The prophets of this period never charge the people with idolatry in the worship of Jahweh. In the light of such a radical change in the life of the nation surely it must be conceded that the changed conditions demanded a new type of religious leader. What we see, then, is not a departure from the historic position of the prophets in relation to the

³The Book Of The Twelve, vol.II, p.236f.

cultus, but a different type of prophet addressing himself to an entirely different historic situation.

There are a number of considerations which make it easy to understand the zeal of these prophets for the rebuilding of the temple of Jahweh, and which at the same time make it clear that they were not interested merely in the ceremonial as such.

In my discussion of the attitude of the pre-exilic prophets to the cultus I stated, that while they were idealists they were also practical men, and that the idea of a purely spiritual religion divorced from all external forms and rites was far from their mind. I can find no reasonable ground for denying that granting the essential requirements of religion, knowledge of and devotion to the one true God, and upright moral life, the prophets would have approved the forms and practices which sincerely embodied the spirit of such religion. It was this that the Deuteronomists sought to do, and after them, Ezekiel and the authors of the Holiness Code. Ezekiel was convinced that religion must be given some concrete embodiment if it were to be a reality to the people. And, as we have seen, Ezekiel regarded the ritual as the means by which the renewed people, the new Israel, would maintain fellowship with God. There can be no doubt that the later prophets were greatly influenced by Ezekiel's view. But what was true of the earlier prophets was even more true of these later prophets because of the radical transformation which had taken place. With the monarchy and all of their national institutions gone, religion was their only bond of union and the temple was the outward symbol of that bond. A purely spiritual worship, emptied of all external forms, was, under the circumstances, an impossibility. The right relations between God and Israel, which Ezekiel had made a pre-requisite of restoration, required for their maintenance the establishment of a legitimate public worship. George Adam Smith makes a plain statement of fact when he says; "Without the temple the continuity of

Israel's religion could not be maintained. An independent state, with the full courses of civic life, was then impossible. The ethical spirit, the regard for each other and God, could prevail over their material interests in no other way than by common devotion to the God of their fathers."⁴ It is unfortunate that the prophets are so often interpreted in the light of later Judaism rather than in the light of the needs and conditions of their own times. And even then, the credit due to later Judaism is forgotten. For the very zeal and passion for "the law and the testimony", which at times became a fanaticism, was the bulwark which withstood all attempts of a pagan world to destroy the spirit of true religion.

It would not be true to say that the centre of gravity in Hebrew religion was shifted by these prophets from the ethical to the ceremonial. They did not emphasize the ritual of worship to the exclusion of the ethical. On the contrary, they manifested a truly prophetic spirit. For while they emphasized the worship of God through external rites, they made it clear that it was to be a worship characterized by sincerity and truth. The prophets of the pre-exilic period were confronted with a religious fanaticism which they denounced; but the post-exilic prophets were faced with religious indifference and scepticism out of which they labored to lift the people. Religious indifference and scepticism are not the soil out of which a sound and wholesome ethical system grows. Haggai assured the people that God had not forsaken them, and by his stirring message he lifted them out of the depths of discouragement and inspired them with the hope of a new and a better day. In appealing to their adverse conditions of life as proof of the divine displeasure, Haggai only did what the great prophets before him had done; they related the calamities that befell the nation to the nation's sin, and made them a new occasion for an appeal to the conscience of the people for a new and increased devotion to God. It was this that Haggai did. The temple lay in ruins, and the indifference of the people to

⁴The Book Of The Twelve, vol.II, p.237.

its restoration was symptomatic of their whole inner attitude to God and religion. Hence the message of Haggai and Zechariah was more than just a summons to rebuild the temple, it was a stirring call to renewed love and loyalty to the God of their fathers.

Zechariah manifested the true spirit of prophecy when, in answer to a question relating to fasting(ch.7), he declared what were the real demands of Jahweh on His people. He impugned the motives back of their fasting; it was not for Jahweh's benefit that they fasted. Here is a repudiation of formal worship in the spirit of the earlier prophets. And similarly, Deutero-Isaiah makes a distinction between true and false worship(cf.Isa.ch.58). As of old the prophets declared that wickedness and worship do not go together in Jahweh religion, so this great prophet reiterates the message of his predecessors; Jahweh desires mercy and not sacrifice."Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the fetters of injustice, to untie the bands of violence, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to share thy bread with the hungry, and that thou bring the outcasts to thy house? when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"(58:6f;), In doing this the glory of Jahweh shall be their reward, and when the cry unto Him He will say, "Here am I." Instead of formal and insincere worship Jahweh demands social justice and mercy. "Execute true judgment and show kindness and compassion every man to his brother; and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you devise evil against his brother in your heart"(Zech.7:9f;). These were the demands enforced by Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, and reiterated with renewed emphasis in the book of Deuteronomy, and summed up in the short but comprehensive statement of the Holiness Code, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Zechariah's reply to the question relating to fasting "indicates that he was more of a prophet than a priest: eating and fasting have no intrinsic merit in themselves;

the past experience of your race, as well as the plain teachings of your prophets, have taught you clearly that Jahweh supremely desires not ceremonial forms but deeds of justice and mercy."⁵ Zechariah manifested the spirit of his predecessors, yea more, he showed the spirit of the Prophet of Galilee(cf. Matt.6:1-18; Lu.11:37-52;). He declared that Jahweh would again bless His people with prosperity(8:9ff;). But the condition is that they "do the things that are right. Speak ye every man the truth with his neighbour; render peaceful decisions in your gates; and let none of you devise evil in his heart against his neighbour; and love no false oath; for all these are the things that I hate"(8:16,17;). This is the teaching of the man whom Cheyne declared to be "deficient in moral energy."⁶

Turning to Malachi, we find that he faced a very different situation from that of Haggai and Zechariah. The temple had been rebuilt many years before, but conditions among the people were very bad. The expectations created by the promises of Deutero-Isaiah, Haggai, and Zechariah, had not been realized. The moral and spiritual tone of the community was at a low ebb. It was a time of disillusionment and bitterness of spirit. The old social evils of the past- class distinctions and oppression of the poor by the rich- had reappeared. The priests were indifferent to their sacred responsibilities, and "the maintenance of the priestly order and the temple worship were looked upon as a costly burden. Enthusiasm gave place to despondency. The echo of rebellious complaint reaches us in the pages of Malachi."⁷ In the face of such conditions faith in God was difficult, and scepticism and despair prevailed. "It is vain to serve God"(3:14;), was the cry of scepticism. The moral law had been set aside(3:5;), and indifference and insincerity marked the services of the temple(1:7ff; 3:8-10;). It was to such a situation as this that the messenger of God addressed himself and his message.

Malachi, for all his interest in the ritual of worship, manifested a true

⁵Kent: Sermons Epistles And Apocalypses Of Israel's Prophets, p.333.

⁶Cf. Jewish Religious Life After The Exile, pp.16ff. But see Wade, Old Testament History, pp.496ff.

⁷Ottley: A Short History Of The Hebrews, p.233.

prophetic spirit, and it was in this spirit that he dealt with the problems of the Judean community. He did not regard the cultus as responsible for the evil conditions that existed, for the cultus itself had been corrupted by the godlessness of the times. It is to this evil that he turns first. The priests are condemned because they have polluted the sanctuary of Jahweh by presenting unworthy offerings, and the people are reproved because they regard the service of Jahweh as a weariness and have dishonored Him with the offering of Blemished sacrifices. Better far that the doors of the temple were sealed up than to have the altar fires kindled to consume offerings so unworthy of Him who is "a great king, and whose name is feared among the nations"(Mal.1:6-14;). Added to their sin of deception is that of robbing God. The law of Deuteronomy, 14:23ff; required that the tithes be brought to the temple and there presented to Jahweh, and afterwards shared with the needy of the community. But this law had been disregarded and the tithe withheld, and this, the prophet declares, is robbery of God(3:7-9;). It is not merely a question of the performance of a religious rite; a great principle is involved, for the tithe was the acknowledgement of the divine ownership of all things and of man's stewardship. The prophet urged the people to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse and promised that Jahweh would bless them with abundance. "Malachi observes and enforces the demands of the Deuteronomic law under which his people had lived since their return from Exile. But he traces each of these to some spiritual principle, to some essential of religion in the character of Israel's God, which is either doubted or neglected by his contemporaries in their lax performance of the law."⁸

The essentials of religion as taught by the pre-exilic prophets and the Deuteronomists, and reiterated by Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, are faith in and love to God, and mercy and justice to one's fellowman. Malachi is not completely absorbed in the wrong done to God, he takes note also of the social evils and injustices. The judgment of Jahweh will fall upon the sorcerers,

⁸Smith, G.A. The Book Of The Twelve, vol.II, p.348.

adulterers, perjurers, oppressors of the ^hierling, the widow and the fatherless, upon those who defraud the alien of his right, and who fear not Jahweh(3:5,6;). The prophet thus links together the wrongs done to men and the wrongs done to God as violations of the spirit of true religion. Where men have no conscience on what is due from them to God they are not likely to give much thought to what they owe their fellowmen. There is a close connection between religious and social wrong-doing. Men cannot look with scorn and indifference upon the sacred things of religion and at the same time manifest a high regard for human rights. A fundamental idea of prophetic teaching, as of Christianity, is, that religion and morality are identical. It is not likely that men who practised S deception and fraud in the performance of their religious duties to God would hesitate to do so in their ethical obligations to men. The post-exilic Isaiah, who has been charged with laying undue emphasis upon institutions and external observances, condemned the social evils just as severely as he did the religious evils. The greed and selfishness of the people are denounced(56:9-57:2;), the ritual is faithfully observed but to the accompaniment of dissension and the oppression of the poor(58:1-12;); Jahweh will take sides with the oppressed against their oppressors(ch.59), and will increase the number of those that keep His law and observe His sabbath(58:13ff;); and the faithful He will reward with peace and prosperity(57:13-21;). The men who neglected and despised the temple services were the rulers who robbed the people through unjust exactions and decisions. They had inter-married with their heathen neighbours, and the religious practices which the prophet condemns are those which Jeremiah and Ezekiel had condemned before the exile, and which the rulers shared with their heathen neighbours(57:5-13;). The ethical element is very pronounced in the message of this prophet.

A very important fact which should not be lost sight of, and which explains the zeal of the prophets of this period for the cultus, is the changed char-

acter of the cultus itself. It was not the ancient popular cultus which the pre-exilic prophets denounced, but a cultus which embodied and conserved the religious and ethical ideals of the pre-exilic prophets. The old cultus had been a syncretism of Mosaism and Baalism, of Jahweh worship and heathen ritual, and it was motivated by pagan conceptions of Jahweh. The cultus of the restoration was a syncretism of prophetic and priestly ideas, purged of every heathen custom and practice, and based upon knowledge of and motivated by devotion to the one true God. Jahweh was conceived of as the Incomparable One, the mighty Creator and sovereign^{God} of the world. Little wonder it was that idolatry and the crude pagan practices, which had been part of the worship of Jahweh down to the exile, were thereafter rigorously excluded. Prophetic teaching had triumphed over the popular worship. Idolatry was overthrown and the cultus purged of all the heathen abuses against which the prophets had inveighed, and the religion of the Jews became a strict monotheism.⁹ Thus, "when the Jews were permitted to return to Palestine the religious outlook and practice of those who did return was predominantly that of the prophets. Thus the long struggle between the prophetic form of religion and its ancient rival was brought to a conclusion with an issue favorable to the prophets."¹⁰ There was, therefore, no departure on the part of the later prophets from the fundamental position of their predecessors. The goal of the prophetic party- a purified cultus - had been attained.

Our study of the prophets of the restoration reveals a further development of the syncretism of prophetic idealism and priestly ceremonialism. But, in my judgment, it is a mistake to construe it as a surrender of the ethical position of the early prophets, for there is no passage which would indicate that the ethical had been made subordinate to the ceremonial.¹¹ Isaiah 56:1; places the ethical demands of God before the ceremonial: "Thus saith Jahweh, Keep ye justice, and do righteousness; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed." The changed conditions affected the religious con-

⁹Cf. Kent: A History Of The Hebrew People, vol.III, pp.95-98.

¹⁰Stevenson: Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Their Lives And Books, p.49f.

¹¹Cf. Wade: Old Testament History, p.498.

sciousness of the people; a situation had developed in which the work of the priest became more necessary. But the priests did not exalt the ceremonial to the exclusion of the ideas of the prophets. The priest-work took unto itself the lofty religious and ethical ideas of the prophets, and in doing this they both strengthened their own work and conserved the ideals of the prophets. It is this that is reflected in the teachings of the prophets of the restoration period, and which explains their attitude to the cultus.

The cultus was refined and moralized by the experience of the exile. "Those who came from Babylon had learned the lesson of the Exile as taught to them by the prophets, and were determined to rebuild the national life only on the foundation of the higher faith of the prophets."¹² It was thus that the prophets of this period sought to build. They were loyal to the ideal of the prophetic party- a cultus that would reflect and conserve the true ethical character of Jahweh, in a word, to give Israel a purified cultus- and all their interest in the cultus was directed to that end. They emphasized righteousness, but not mere legal righteousness. In their teaching, "righteousness includes morality, correct ritual, and a certain attitude of mind towards God."¹³

Hence, in the teaching of these prophets in relation to the cultus, they nowhere present it as "a cold or chilling formalism, for there is still the clear ethical consciousness with a due sense of individual responsibility, and a keen sense of the spiritual element in the relation between Jahweh and His people, particular but rooted in His sovereign grace."¹⁴

The next and by no means the least important witness to the influence of prophetic idealism on the cultus of Israel is the Psalter, and to that I turn in the chapter following.

¹²Stevenson: Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Their Lives And Books, p.93.

¹³Bennett: The Religion Of The Post-Exilic Prophets, p.275.

¹⁴Ridgley: Jewish Ethical Idealism, p.57.

CHAPTER XIV.
THE PSALTER- THE HYMNBOOK OF THE TEMPLE.

The Psalter has been called "The Hymnbook of The Second Temple," "The Praise-Book of Post-Exilic Judaism." And some scholars even go so far as to affirm that it contains no pre-exilic psalms. But it should not be forgotten that there was a first temple at Jerusalem, as well as important sanctuaries at Beth-el, Gilgal, and other places, at which the worship was carried on just as earnestly and joyfully as in the second temple. I am not, however, greatly concerned with this question here. The Psalter, no doubt, was compiled, edited, and adapted to the religious needs of a later generation, and it is, therefore, evidence for an understanding of the religion of post-exilic times.

The Psalter is more than an anthology of Hebrew lyric poetry; it is a spiritual biography in which the hopes and fears, the faith and perplexity, the struggles and triumphs, the joys and sorrows of the saints of a bygone age are expressed. It is shot through and through with the idealism of the prophets. Religion is conceived of as a personal relation between the individual soul and God. The summum bonum of life is found in fellowship with God, who is the source of all good and the only true object of faith and devotion. I find difficulty in harmonizing this conception of religion with the view so frequently expressed by some scholars, namely, that influenced by the transcendentalism of Ezekiel, after the exile Jahweh became so transcendent that the individual could not have fellowship with Him directly. The Psalter teaches that God has revealed in man that which is not to be seen in nature, His holy and righteous character. And if man is to truly reflect the image of his Creator he must strive after holiness and righteousness. They who seek to enjoy God's fellowship must reflect God's character. "Jahweh, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? And the answer is, that this blessed privilege is accorded

only to the man of integrity and of justice and of truthfulness(cf.Ps.24).Here the emphasis is where the prophets always put it, on practical religion; the fulfilment of one's duty to one's neighbour is made the primary condition of fellowship with God.

If the men of a later ~~age~~ interpreted the prophetic utterances respecting the cultus as some modern critics do, such a view is not evident in ~~the~~ this the greatest of all devotional books. And in saying this I do not forget that there are statements in some of the psalms which seem to disparage sacrifice and demand in its stead moral obedience(cf. Pss.40:6f; 50:8ff; 51:16ff;).

The Psalter is the product of the inner religious spirit of the saints of God. "They express in exquisite words the kinship which every thoughtful heart craves to find with a supreme, unchanging, loving God, who will be to him a protector, guardian, and friend." The Psalter deals with the great universal truths of religion, and with the fundamental needs of the human soul, as they are viewed in the light of the knowledge of the divine Being and character. The religion of the Psalter is the religion of the heart, a conception which the prophets were the first to enunciate, and from whom the psalmists derived it.

Thus, in its moral and spiritual teaching, the Psalter follows and is loyal to the idealism of the prophets. What place does it give to the cultus? Did the men who compiled and edited the Psalter regard the cultus and the prophetic ideals as incompatible? Evidently not, for it contains many liturgies relating to sacrifice, and in many of these liturgies the great spiritual and ethical principles of the prophets are enforced. The process of priestly-prophetic syncretism and the influence of prophetic idealism on the cultus of Israel is nowhere more evident than in the song-book of the temple.

The temple and its worship lay close to the heart of the saint of God, it was the centre of his devotional life. And this, as I have shown, was particu-

larly true under the changed conditions of the post-exilic period. There are many psalms which give expression to the deep feeling of reverence for the sanctuary. But it was not the superstitious regard for the temple which Jeremiah had so strongly condemned. The temple was for the saint of the Psalter the place where he met God. He longed for the time when he should appear before God(42:2;) it stirs within him thoughts of the loving-kindness of God(48:9;); within it he has caught visions of the power and glory of God(63:2;); he regarded as blessed that one who is privileged to enter the divine presence and dwell within His courts(65:4;); it was while at worship within the temple that light broke on moral problems(73:17;); and "honor and majesty are before Him: strength and beauty are in His sanctuary"(96:6ff;).

Sacrifice, which the prophets so scathingly denounced, is the central act in the temple worship, the climax towards which the whole ritual steadily moves. Sacrifice is regarded as the sealing ordinance of the covenant between God and His people, and that in a psalm which is often quoted in support of the view that sacrifice has no value in the sight of God(50:5;). There are many psalms in which sacrifice is regarded as an expression of gratitude to God for His goodness to the offeror(cf. Pss.27:6; 43:4; 51:19; 54:6; 107:22; 116:17; 118:27;). And, as when approaching an earthly ruler with a plea a gift is brought to him, so, in the Psalter, sacrifice is the regular accompaniment of approach to God (20:3; 66:13,15; 96:8;).

Nevertheless, with all this recognition of the place of sacrifice in the worship of God, there is an equal recognition of the prophetic doctrine, that sacrifice apart from a right attitude or disposition on the part of the worshipper is of no value in the sight of God. Ps.40:6; echoes the rebuke which Isaiah and Micah administered to a people who thought that sacrifice in itself was pleasing to God apart from obedience to His moral requirements. God desires more the thankful heart than thank-offerings(cf. Pss.50:14,23; 69:30f;). The prophets

while assuring the sinful people of hope in God never urged sacrifice as a condition of the forgiveness of sin. Nor is there in the Psalter any thought of sacrifice being made the ground of pardon. Forgiveness of sin is conditioned on penitence and contrition of soul. The only sacrifices which a sin-burdened soul may bring to God are, "a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart" (Ps.51:17; cf.141:2;). The true and acceptable worshipper is he whose life conforms to the moral requirements of God. It is not ceremonial defilement that makes the worshipper unacceptable to God; that which invalidates both the gift and the giver is defilement of the inner springs of life, which pollutes all the streams of thought and action. Therefore, it is enjoined to "offer the sacrifices of righteousness and trust in Jahweh"(Ps.4:5;). And again, "Who shall ascend into the hill of Jahweh? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart"(cf. Ps.24:3ff; 15:1ff; 26:6; 66:18;). This conception of the acceptable worshipper has so much in common with the teaching of the pre-exilic prophets that it is difficult to regard it as other than a reflection of prophetic doctrine(cf. Amos 4:4f; 5:4-7; 5:14ff; Isa.1:12f; Micah 6:6ff; Jer.7:1-16;).

The Psalter teaches, as did the prophets, that God's first demand is for moral integrity in those who would acceptably worship Him. Unclean hands defile the gift which they present, and an impure heart robs it of its sanctity. God desires the homage of hearts that are pure and true. He will not accept worship from those who draw near with their lips while their hearts are far from Him, however elaborate their worship may be. Nor will he who has sworn to falsehood be acceptable to God. For he who lies to his neighbour thereby taints his address to God; nor will he who deceives his neighbour with false words hesitate to address God with words of fulsome and lying flattery, for the true man is loyal to the truth at all times.

The Psalter and the prophets are one in stressing the teaching that the inner life is what determines the relation of the worshipper to God, but, it was

the prophet who first stressed it. The psalmist saw nothing inconsistent in relating the inner life to the ritual practices, for while it was the inner spiritual disposition of the worshipper that determined his acceptance with God, yet the sacrificial rites were the means of approach to His presence. "In all the liturgies of the Psalter the emphasis is not on what the cult in itself can do. Rather the emphasis is on the character of God to whom the worshippers bring their devotion and on what He is willing to do for the salvation of the people, on one hand. And on the other hand, on the right temper of the worshipper when he fulfills his ritual act. The act of the cultus becomes no more than the meeting place of these two lines of thought. Emphasis is not on the opus operatum of the rite, nor even on the correct method of fulfilment. What makes the burden of the cult hymns is the inner life of the worshipper. The psalm which he repeats or hears recited with each sacrifice guides him to worthy thoughts of God, and helps him to examine his own conscience and to express his inward needs."¹

Kautzsch interprets Pss. 40:6; 50:8ff; and 51:16f; as a statement of the prophetic conception of the "true service of God in the worship of Him in spirit and in truth without any outward ceremonies and performances."² But he seems to overlook the fact that these very psalms were used in connection with "outward ceremonies and performances" in the temple worship. Psalm 40 is a liturgical statement of the prophetic doctrine that to obey is better than sacrifice. Ps. 50 is ch. 1 of Isaiah turned into a liturgy, it is "conceived in the very spirit, almost the language of Isaiah."³ What the psalm really enforces is the uselessness of sacrifice without ethical purity; it is not a thankoffering merely that finds acceptance with God, but a truly thankful heart. The context shows clearly that this is the teaching of the psalm. Jahweh is not to be bribed with the sacrifices of those who have no regard for His law; He will have no fellowship with those who hold fellowship with evil-doers. But let them come

¹A.C. Welch: The Psalter In Life History And Worship, p. 102f.

²Religion Of Israel; Hastings Dictionary Bible, vol. V, p. 686.

³Davison: The Praises Of Israel, p. 154.

before Him with sincere spiritual feelings and an earnest desire to do His will, then, and not till then, will they enjoy His favor. "There is," says A.B. Davidson, "no more remarkable picture of the consciousness of sin in Israel than that shown in Ps. 51. The psalm contains a single prayer, that for forgiveness. It expresses the pollution of sin; its being inherited; its being against God no matter what form it takes; its tendency to encroach upon and swallow up the moral lights of the soul, till all that can be called the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, and the true idea of a life in the world, and an activity among men which is founded on forgiveness."⁴ Such sin as this was no mere physical uncleanness which might be atoned for by some ritual observance. It was no sin of inadvertence but one which had its roots in the will, and for which, therefore, the sacrificial system could not atone. "Because this is his view of sin he naturally says that Jahweh requires no sacrifice. The sacrificial system was framed to meet the condition of men who had sinned per incuriam."⁵ All that he can do, then, in such a case, is to cast himself upon the mercy of God and offer to Him the sacrifice of a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.

But how is the presence of such plain-spoken views respecting the value of sacrifice in liturgies used in connection with the offering of sacrifice to be explained? One writer⁶ has shown that the psalms were orders of service used in the temple worship. There were a number of distinct stages in the service, but the "great moment" came with the offering of the sacrifice. Appropriate psalms were used at the different stages of the service. The offering of the sacrifice was immediately preceded by an act of ritual purification, which was accompanied by a liturgy enforcing the spiritual meaning of the act. Now it is no mere external or ceremonial cleansing, but such a purification as will stand the scrutiny and satisfy the ethical demands of the Holy One into whose presence the worshipper is going. These liturgies were sometimes simple (cf. 26:2-6; 84:11;) and sometimes quite elaborate. It is ~~is~~ at this point that there sometimes occur

⁴Old Testament Theology, pp. 231-234.

⁵Welch: The Psalter In Life Worship And History, p. 110

⁶Stacy Wady: The Homes Of The Psalms.

denunciations of sacrifice so characteristic of the prophets. The great example of a purification ode is Ps.51, which, with its objections to sacrifice in v.16, was "used in the actual service of which sacrifice was the culmination, the great moment."⁷ The purpose of these purification odes was to properly prepare the worshipper for the great moment in the service, and to warn him against reliance upon any magical power in the outward act to secure spiritual results. "What matters most in the eyes of God is the heart of the worshipper; He will have mercy and social justice, not merely correct worship. He abhors the idea of a people with an unclean, unjust social life, thinking all is well so long as they duly observe new moons and sabbaths and offer abundance of sacrifice."⁸

The praise-book of post-exilic religion thus very clearly reflects the influence of prophetic idealism on the cultus of Israel. There are, as I have intimated, varying attitudes towards the ritual on the part of the psalmists. But it should be remembered that the prophets themselves did not fully agree in their attitude towards the temple. And while some of the psalmists regard sacrifice as of less importance than spiritual thanksgiving, yet it is out of Zion, the dwelling place of Jahweh, that the divine glory and beauty shine forth. "The Book of Psalms, as a whole, can certainly not be accused of Pharisaism. Its emphasis falls on God, not on men, and its dominant note is one of strong confidence in Him, a confidence usually buoyant and joyful(cf.Pss.91, 16, 107)."⁹ The Psalter bears witness to the blending of the ritual and the ethical in the religion of Israel. It is permeated with the ideals of the prophets yet it retains a place, and a large place, for the cultus. But it is a cultus spiritualized and moralized on the basis of prophetic teaching. Religion was not regarded as a matter merely of objective performances in terms of the ritual; the real emphasis is on the moral and spiritual realities of life. Psalm 24 teaches in principle what the apostle Paul centuries later preached, namely, that membership in the covenant people of Israel is not in itself suf-

⁷ Stacy Wady: Homes Of The Psalms, p.132f.

⁸ Ibid, p.251

⁹ Cf. H.Wheeler Robinson: The Psalmists, p.54f.

efficient ground for claiming kinship to God. Fellowship with God is conditioned by moral integrity. He, who would encompass the altar of God must first wash his hands in innocency. The fact that countless numbers of the devout in every age have fed upon the Psalter and attained to a robust spiritual life, is evidence enough of the spirituality of the religion to which it gives expression. And that was the religion that centred in and was given expression through the ritual forms of the temple worship. In the Psalter we are furnished with a standard of religious feeling, for out of its songs and prayers deep answers unto deep. Christian hymnody does not express a more fervid devotion to or a more implicit trust and confidence in God, nor does it lay greater stress on the essentials of true religion than the Psalter. Religion, in its simplest definition, is a personal relation between the individual soul and God. The Psalter is a commentary on this definition, for the psalms had their origin in the soul's consciousness of an intimate relation with the transcendent God, who graciously condescends to enter into fellowship with men. These psalms, which originated in the religious consciousness of men, and which have come singing down through the ages, will continue to make their appeal to the hearts of men so long as they possess any sense of their need of and dependence upon God. Even when time is no more and faith has become sight above, many of the psalms will be appropriate in the mouth of the redeemed who surround the throne of God and of the Lamb, to whom they sing, "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, for ever and ever."

The religion of the cult hymns of the Psalter is the religion which the great prophets constantly preached- the inner religion of the heart. It began with the prophets, but for a long time it lived only in the hearts of a few individuals; it was not the national religion. But in the liturgies of the praise-book of post-exilic religion it was given a more wide-spread expression. The men who compiled and adapted the Psalter for use in temple services, so

far from interpreting the utterances of the prophets as an outright rejection of the whole ritual of worship, sought to combine the ethical and the ritual. In the ritual they found the forms of worship, but it was in the idealism of the prophets that they found the true spirit of worship. "Thus in the sacrificial and ceremonial cult ----- there was a force laying hold of the popular mind and conserving the great concepts of the prophets."¹⁰

¹⁰Ridgley: Jewish Ethical Idealism, p.84.

CHAPTER XV

CONCLUSION

A great deal has been written about the "legal morality" of post-exilic religion, and it has been regarded as a negation of the ethical teachings of the great prophets. In my judgment the "legal morality" of post-exilic religion was a distinct gain over the idolatry and immorality of the popular pre-exilic religion. And when it is said that "by the time of Ezra and Nehemiah earlier prophetic standards were quite reversed, and legal morality had become the ideal instead of the free spiritual morality of the earlier prophets,"¹ it may be asked, where, outside of prophetic circles, was the free spiritual morality of the prophets held? How were the ideals of the prophets to find expression, be preserved, or advanced? This question was answered in the priestly syncretism of Deuteronomy, the Holiness Code, the Psalter, and the later ritual legalism. The union of prophetic idealism and priestly legalism was not the bigamous relationship it is too often regarded to be. What, it is asked, has prophetic idealism and priestly legalism in common? Much more than is sometimes conceded. It is true that in the early period the prophets and a certain type of priest appear in conflict with one another. It is also true that the prophets were in open antagonism to a certain type of prophet. It was not the office which the prophets opposed but men who prostituted their holy office to unworthy ends. But there were faithful and devoted priests in Israel who were doubtless as much concerned for the purity of Jahweh worship as were the prophets. The ritual legalism of the priests was not a lapse into an empty and cold formalism; it was the embodiment in visible forms of the positive teachings of the prophets. In what other way could the prophetic ideals have been presented to and kept within the spiritual apprehension of the people?

Dr. Barton is led to acknowledge that the reversion to legal morality carr-

¹Barton: A sketch Of Semitic Origins, pp.302-305.

ied with it a very distinct gain. "This change," he says, "seems to have been in turn providential.-----Times were at hand that would try men's souls- times when an objective ritual for which Israel could struggle was a necessity if she were to survive for the high service which awaited her. This ritual was codified and accepted at a time when prophetic ideals of Jahweh had deeply penetrated both people and priests, so that the new Levitical law, though compiled from the ancient and sometimes superstitious usages of the old local sanctuaries(cf.Num.5:11,21, and sacrifice to Azazel in Lev.16)was so purified of most of its dross that it reflected the new conception of God."²

The blending of the ethical with the ritual was due to the cooperation of the priests with the prophets. They were willing not merely to accept the standards of the prophets and incorporate them in the ritual codes and liturgies, but to give them the chief place and make the acceptance of the worshipper and his worship contingent upon moral worth. The prophet and the priest were not in constant opposition. The prophets proclaimed new aspects of truth and the priests gave effect to them in the codes and liturgies. "The way in which prophet and priest are brought into close association in all their work in the Old Testament has been ignored. Prophetic ideals penetrate into the most intimate recesses of the priestly code. But the most outstanding illustration is in the Psalter, the liturgies of which, framed largely to serve the uses of the priests, are everywhere saturated with the thought of the prophet."³

In the post-exilic period the atoning efficacy of sacrifice was emphasized. In explanation of this some scholars point to the fact that the Babylonians had a very elaborate sacrificial system, the most important feature of which was the idea of propitiation. And because the atoning efficacy of sacrifice was not emphasized in Israel until after the exile, it is assumed that this was a result of the close contact of the priests of Israel with Babylonian religion during the exile. Now, I stated in the beginning of this discussion that

²Barton: A Sketch Of Semitic Origins, pp.305

³Welch: The Psalter In Life History And Worship, p.102.

any attempt to understand or explain the cultus of Israel must start from a survey of the cultic practices of the primitive Semitic world. The cultus was not the distinctive thing in Israel's religion, for the Israelites had that in common with Semitic peoples generally. But it is too much to assume that the idea of propitiation was foreign to Hebrew thought until after the exile. There is evidence in the early literature that the idea of propitiation was associated with sacrifice in early Israel, and that the sacrifice presented to God was regarded as a means of appeasing His wrath(cf.Ex.21:30; I Sam.3:14;). There does not appear to be sufficient grounds for regarding propitiation or expiation as the main idea associated with sacrifice in early Israel, but I would not deny that belief in propitiatory sacrifices was current in Israel, as it was among their neighbours, the Moabites.⁴ There was no special piacular sacrifice in early Israel; these special forms appeared in the later legal age.⁵ And even then, besides the chattath(חַטָּאת) and the 'asham(אֲשָׁם), which were regarded as distinctly expiatory sacrifices, the burnt-offering and the peace-offering were thought of as possessing propitiatory efficacy(cf.Lev.1:4; 16:24; Ezek.45:15,17;). The idea of substitution is also present in the early literature(cf.Gen.22:13; Ex.13:13,15; Mic.6:6ff; Jer.19:5; Ezek.20:25), but not in the sense of the sinner's guilt being transferred to the innocent victim which bore the sinner's penalty.. If the vicarious death of the victim were the main idea in atonement, how, then, could a cereal offering serve as a piacular sacrifice?(cf.Lev.5:11-13;). The laying on of the hand in the Old Testament betokens in a general way benediction or dedication(Gen.48:14; Num.8:10; 27:18,23; Deut.34:9;). "By the laying on of the hand the sacrificer dedicates each victim, as his own property, to some higher object, of course, varying according to the intention with which he offers the sacrifice. Thus in the case of a sin-offering he dedicates it as a means of atonement for himself, in order that it may be the bearer and instrument of his repentance. -----The victim in its death is the medium of the sinner's penitence, not the symbol of

⁴See Sayce: Higher Criticism And The Monuments, p.366.

⁵Cf. Gray: Sacrifice In The Old Testament, p.66.

the sinner being purified."⁶

Sacrifice, when conceived of as a gift to God, could be made to serve many purposes, among them expiation and propitiation. If the presentation of a gift could effect reconciliation between men who had been estranged (cf. Gen. 32:30;), men would readily conceive of it as being likewise effective in their relations with God (cf. Ps. 45:12;). David, fearing that Saul's enmity had been incited against him by Jahweh because of some sin he had unwittingly committed, thought of placating Jahweh with the sweet odor of sacrifice (I Sam. 26:19; cf. Gen. 8:21; Lev. 20:21;). Saul offered sacrifice at Gilgal for the purpose of "smoothing the face" (⁷חָפַץ לְפָנָיו) of Jahweh (I Sam. 13:11ff;). This same expression is used in connection with Jehoahaz's supplication for the removal of Jahweh's anger against His people (II Kings 13:3f;). It may be, as some affirm, that the terms *chattath* and *'asham* were unknown before the exile, but the history of the pre-exilic period leaves us in no doubt that the people had often incurred the anger of Jahweh and that they felt the need of propitiating Him. In the pre-exilic period, "the regularly recurring sacrifices- those of the great festivals of the new moons and sabbaths were occasions of mirth, and the religious sentiment that accompanied them was gratitude; the expiatory and propitiatory sacrifices with their naturally more sombre sentiment were occasional."⁷ But after the exile the emphasis was placed on the expiatory sacrifices. The experiences of the exile had brought home to the people the enormity of their sin. The prophets had warned that Jahweh would destroy the nation because of its sin, and their predictions had been fulfilled. As a consequence there was a greater disposition to listen to the words of the prophets, and the people sought Jahweh's forgiveness and reconciliation. Ezekiel had emphasized the holiness of God and the people's need of moral cleansing as a prerequisite to restoration of fellowship with God. "Ye shall be holy, for I, Jahweh, am Holy," is the keynote of the Holiness Code. The Levitical ritual in

⁶Schultz: Old Testament Theology, vol. II, pp. 392, 393.

⁷Gray: Sacrifice In The Old Testament, p. 95.

its many precautions against incurring sin, as well as in the ever-present thought of the need of atonement, reflects the profound sense of sin that had come to prevail. Hebrew thought, as expressed in the laws of uncleanness (Lev. 11-16) has reached a high stage of development. They reflect the prophetic conception of God as a God of holiness and the requirement which divine holiness made upon the people- the obligation to manifest holiness in their own lives if they would live in harmonious relations with a holy God.

Thus, in time, the cultus of Israel took to itself that which distinguished it from the cults of all other peoples; and the distinctive thing in Hebrew religion became the distinctive thing in the cultus of Israel. "It is the distinction of Israel," says David Smith, "and an evidence of the peculiar providence which directed her national history that the idea of sacrifice developed along ethical and spiritual lines. It was determined by her conception of God. He was revealed to her as righteous and holy. He hated sin, and inasmuch as they were sinful, the people realized their alienation from Him; and thus sacrifice became for them an act of repentance and consecration."⁸ But it was the prophets who refined and spiritualized the idea of God and lifted it to higher ethical and spiritual levels. They concerned themselves with the essential nature of God in its moral aspect. They were then led to think of what God, being what He is, would require of His people in their relation to Him. His first requirement, they insisted, was for holiness; the obligation which the covenant relation imposed on Israel was that of manifesting the character of their God.

Dr. Beyer, while affirming that the aim of the priests was ultimately that of the prophets, practically declares that the means by which the priests sought to achieve the common aim differed in no way from those which the earlier prophets had rejected. "Obedience was to them, as to the prophets, the all important concern, but it was not obedience to the voice of conscience, the inner law of

⁸The Atonement In The Light Of History And The Modern Spirit, p.41f.

which Jeremiah had spoken, but obedience to all these outward regulations, which they imposed on the people as the direct command of Jahweh. -----

Religion was a matter of the cult. The earlier prophets had violently protested against such a conception of religion and rejected the entire cultic apparatus as contrary to the will of God."⁹ I cannot accept this view because I do

not grant that the prophets rejected the cultus per se or advocated a purely spiritual religion divorced from all external forms. "This law did not materialize worship so far as we compare it with the actual religion of the prophets, remembering that there never was any prophetic religion, but only a criticism by the prophets of a worship thoroughly engrained with idolatry and superstition: it is this worship that we must compare with the worship of the Levitical code if we would appraise the latter justly."¹⁰ The prophets contended for a

religious worship that would truly reflect the nature of Jahweh, and because the cultus of their time failed to do this they condemned it. The later priestly ritual, the "Levitical ritual," as it is called, did not ignore the demands of ethical religion, it enforced them. Chapter 19 of the book of Leviticus contains what is declared to be the best representation of the ethics of ancient Israel. "Leviticus is the literary monument of the Hebrew priesthood. Overshadowed in the earlier history by kings and prophets, represented in the pages of written prophecy by the degenerate members of the order, it is in Leviticus and Ezekiel that we see how the priests trained Israel to associate a high standard of morality with a stately form of worship, which, though freely using material means, was in its essence and still more as compared with contemporary forms of religion, severely spiritual and rich in symbolical significance."¹¹

If the priests had ultimately the same aim as the prophets it should be remembered that the prophets had it first. Hence, the priests took these older laws and customs that could be adapted to the new conditions, while at the same time they eliminated every degrading heathen element from the ritual of worship, and gave the ritual a higher and more spiritual meaning. The whole aim of the

¹⁰Loisy: The Religion Of Israel, p.211; cf. pp.150, and 188.

¹¹G.H. Battersby: Art. "Leviticus" Hastings Dictionary Bible, vol.III, p.108b.

Levitical law was to protect the worship of Jahweh against the influence of heathenism. "Not as discarding prophecy, but in order to conserve its spiritual treasures, the exilic leaders turned to the legal precepts."¹² Therefore, as Dr. Kent points out, "the priestly laws are not antithetic to the older prophetic legislation. Both continued to exist side by side until they were united by a priestly editor. The priestly lawgivers assumed the ethical and personal teachings of the early codes as the basis upon which they reared their ritual and hierarchy."¹³

It is true that the ritualistic element has a large place in the priestly work. But does that justify the statement that ritual was the primary concern of the priests? Were they not concerned primarily with the holiness of God? And does not their desire to make the worship consonant with the holiness of God and, therefore, acceptable to Him, explain their interest in the ritual? The experiences of the exile had stirred the conscience of the people as it had never before been stirred, and what conscience came to feel about God and sin is reflected in the priestly ritual. The priestly codes emphasized the holiness of God, the uncleanness of sin, man's need of cleansing from sin's defilement, and the necessity of God's people exhibiting in their lives the holy character of their God. The idea of sacrifice was transformed. It was no longer regarded merely as a present offered to Jahweh in sublimated form(Ps.50:12-16;); it is an expression of spiritual homage which is due to Jahweh alone. Sacrifices formerly offered to retain the favor or placate the jealousy of God are, in the priestly ritual, designed to make atonement for sin. The sin-offering brought by the worshipper to the altar of God was at once the vehicle of his repentance and the divinely accepted atonement for his sin. "Jewish sacrifice, then, was an atonement for sin, dictated by the twofold consciousness of divine holiness and human guilt; and its ritual covered the whole course of human experience. It was the sinner's pathway to God, and it conducted him stage by stage from the alienation of sin to the peace of reconciliation."¹⁴ The Day of Atonement

¹²Ridgley: Jewish Ethical Idealism, p.70

¹³Israel's Laws And Legal Precedents, p.48.

¹⁴David Smith: Atonement In Light Of History And Modern Spirit, p.42.

(Lev. 16, 23:26-32;) is one of the new elements of the later priestly legislation, and it expresses the profound sense of guilt which the terrible catastrophe that befell the nation had created. It was to be observed on the 10th. day of the seventh month as a day of prayer, of fasting, of penitence, of meditation, and of spiritual awakening. Such an observance would serve to arouse the consciousness of sin and to stimulate the desire for atonement and reconciliation with God. And as it is celebrated to-day by Jewish people "Yom Kippur" makes a direct appeal and challenge to the human heart and conscience with emphasis upon the duty of personal communion with God, the source of all righteousness, in an effort to make human life as God-like as possible. The promise of pardon is ever present in the ritual of the day, and the divine forgiveness is assured to those whose repentance is honest and whose return is complete.

The legal sacrifices, however, had their limitations; there were crimes for which they could make no atonement, and for which they were never designed to atone. The sin-offerings were efficacious in the case of offenses of a less serious nature. But for sins of rebellion, the open and defiant violation of the law of God, there was nothing the sinner could do except to throw himself on the mercy of God. This was the view the prophets took of Israel's sin; it was rebellion against God. Hence, they made no demand for sacrifice as an atonement for sin, for Israel's sin was so wilful that no sacrifice they might offer could atone for it. It cannot be said that the view which the ritual legalism takes of sin in its essential nature is a less serious view than that of the prophets.

It was thus that the idealism of the prophets refined and spiritualized the cultus of Israel; thus did the priests conserve and embody the prophetic ideals in the legal forms of the cultus. "Properly speaking a religion of the prophets has never existed; -----but there was a large and strenuous effort to raise the worship of Israel towards an ever growing perfection in all

that concerns religious belief, the moral sense, and social justice. So far as that effort tended to disengage itself from institutions, and to recognize no law but personal inspiration, it was lost, and could only lose itself in the void. In so far as it was embodied in an institution, it lived and worked. Jeremiah represented the pure spirit of prophetic Jahwism. It was the written law, that he despised, which saved out of his generous dreams all that was able to be utilised by the future time."¹⁵

The ritual legalism of the priests is the connecting link between prophecy and Christianity. The ethical ideals which the priests embodied in their codes and liturgies were a legacy to which Christianity fell heir. And though Jesus, when He began His ministry, found that religion had become a fanaticism which made all life a devotion to ritual, He nevertheless took up and reenforced the ethical demands of the priestly ritual. He proclaimed the perfection of God, the sinfulness of man, the need of reconciliation, and insisted upon God-likeness in those who professed to be God's children. He summed up the whole duty of man to God in the words of Deuteronomy, and made love the supreme motive of obedience to God. Likewise He summed up the whole duty of man to his fellow-man in the words of Leviticus: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Likeness to God; love the supreme motive of all devotion to God; and love for one's fellows; these great demands which comprehend the whole of man's religious and ethical duties were proclaimed by the prophets, conserved by the priests, and reenforced by Jesus Christ.

The profound symbolism of the ritual legalism impressed upon the mind of the worshipper a sense of God's holiness and of his own unworthiness, and created in him a sense of his need of reconciliation. Such need was provided for in the ritual of sacrifice. But there were, as we have noticed, limits to the atoning efficacy of the sin-offering. This insufficiency looked forward to Christ, "A sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they," who fulfills all the

¹⁵Loisy: The Religion Of Israel, p.188f.

types and by His atoning sacrifice covers all sin and satisfies every spiritual longing of the human heart. "The law of sacrifice reminds us of our human need for something visible and outward in our worship, while its particulars happily illustrate, even if they do not teach, the various parts of Christian devotion. Sacrifices are elements in the visible fabric of religion by which the spiritual service of the holy God was given a protective shell for its growth; eternal moments in the life energy of the worshipping spirit, visualized in temporary form: signposts pointing to the perfect Sacrifice; earnest of that sacrament which replaces sacrifice proper by communion and commemoration."¹⁶

The priestly system is not fairly appraised when it is regarded as merely an unspiritual system of formal ceremonial rules and regulations. For, as has been well said, "Law and spirituality are not necessarily antagonistic terms, but rather complementary. Spirituality fares best in the world of sinful conflict clothed in the garb of law. The garb must not be taken for the real, but the spirit must not be left carelessly exposed to the hard knocks and rude comments of the world. The whole legal movement may be viewed as an attempt to embody for practical preservation and transmission the spirituality of Hebrew prophecy, the rich spiritual treasures inherited from the past by Judaism."¹⁷ The spiritual and ethical ideals of the prophets needed a body in which they could be preserved and presented, and the ceremonial forms needed a spirit that would vitalize them and make them a real help in the culture of the spiritual life. Each found its need supplied in the other. The priestly regulations were an outgrowth of the attempt to elevate the moral and religious life of the people in post-exilic times, and the principles which they embodied formed the basis of the work of reform, as had the principles of the D code in B.C.621. The priestly legislators incorporated and presented in the form of specific precepts the fundamental truths which the prophets had proclaimed with but little acceptance

¹⁶Battersby: Article "Leviticus" Hastings Dictionary Bible, vol. III, p. 109a.

¹⁷Ridgley: Jewish Ethical Idealism, p. 73.

on the part of the people. But when presented in concrete forms, as in the precepts of the ritual, there was a general acceptance of them. It is the spirit that giveth life, and without the religious and ethical idealism of the prophets the ritual would have been a system of dead and empty forms. But when the full significance of the priestly legislation is grasped it becomes a question whether it does not set forth the highest ideal of the religious life in the Old Testament. "This strange system which seems to us in our love of freedom, so distasteful, was, after all, the highest result yet achieved in the development of Israel's religion. It was based upon the doctrines of the prophet-priests, viz., individualism and solidarity. Its keynote was monotheism. Its God was a God whose supreme attribute was holiness, and who expected in every individual of the sacred community a holiness like His own. The underlying thought was the overwhelming sense of sin. Now, for the first time, the preaching of the prophets through all the centuries has found its place in the hearts of the people. The prayers are prayers of confession. God has grown greater and man more humble in the sight of God. God is the God of the whole world. Israel is a company of individuals in a sacred community. Every act of life must be holy. The religious feeling is deeper than ever before and more universal."¹⁸

And even when those requirements of the priestly laws which seem to us to materialize the idea of holiness are interpreted from the point of view of the aesthetical, it cannot be denied that they possess great value. It is well to recognize the place in religion of the ethical and the aesthetical, for each has its place. The supreme place belongs to the ethical, as the prophets and Jesus insisted; it is more essential to do the will of God than to address Him in beautiful phraseology. The supreme test of every religion must be what it does for and in those who profess it spiritually and ethically. Christianity ~~Christianity~~ has justified itself, not by its fine cathedrals with their elaborate services of worship, but by the creation of noble character that manifests

¹⁸W.R. Harper: The Priestly Element In The Old Testament, p.54f.

itself in the service of good works to mankind. The ethical side of religion has to do with what a man is and does; it furnishes him with standards of life and conduct, and that chiefly in his relations with his fellowmen.

But there is an aesthetical side to religion also; there is not only right action but also right attitude, not only good works but good taste as well, in religion. Mere work any more than mere ritual is not the whole of religion. The aesthetical, which is the worship side of religion, has to do with a man's religious feelings, his appreciation of God. The psalmist gave expression to it when he cried, "O Jahweh, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." (Ps. 8:1;). The Psalter is permeated with the ethical ideas of the prophets, but it manifests a profound sense of the beauty and splendour and perfection of God. It was in the temple that Isaiah, the greatest of the prophets, caught a vision of the ineffable glory and holiness of God. "Etiquette," says Dr. Knudson, has its place in religion. It is an indication not only of good taste but of spiritual refinement. It shows a sensitiveness of feeling towards the divine such as could not be expressed by mere obedience to the moral law. Moral obedience is fundamental and absolutely essential, but ceremonialism has its place in the further culture of the soul. If it obscures, as it sometimes does, the moral requirements of religion, it is, of course, to be condemned. But in and of itself it simply aims by a reverent and thoughtful approach to God to give expression to the inviolable purity of his nature. It aims to refine the sense of the divine presence. Ceremonial holiness as applied both to God and to man had a rational place in Old Testament religion."¹⁹ All of this is true of priestly legalism, as true as it was untrue of the pre-exilic cultus. By the laws of uncleanness and the demand for perfection in everything that comes into relation to God, it aimed "by a reverent and thoughtful approach to God to give expression to the inviolable purity of His nature."

¹⁹The Religious Teachings Of The Old Testament, p.150f.

The cultus of old Israel has been transformed, it has been refined and spiritualized. And the transformation has been wrought by the influence of the religious and ethical idealism of the prophets. The prophets, by their lofty conception of God, refined the sense of the divine presence, which culminated in the elimination of every heathen element from the cultus on the one hand, and on the other hand, in making it express the true nature of God and of the relation between Him and those who claimed to be His people.

Two extremes of thought have appeared among scholars on the matter of ^{the} worship. On one hand there is the extreme view, which claims support from the prophets and Jesus, viz., that all ritual forms are worthless and that character and conduct is alone important in religion. The worship of God is to be purely spiritual, and it is assumed that it cannot be so if external forms are used; outward ceremonies and performances are not thought to be consistent with the worship of God in spirit and in truth. On the other hand there is the extreme of sacerdotalism, with its emphasis on outward performances, elaborate ritual, and dazzling display. It is religion reduced to forms entirely.

It is the part of wisdom to avoid either of these extremes. It is not to be supposed that either the prophets or Jesus countenanced one or other of them. God is a Spirit and His presence cannot be limited to any one place, as Jesus taught, it pervades the universe. Nevertheless, the human mind cannot think of God without in a sense localizing Him; it needs the aid of the visible and the concrete in order to envision God. It is this fact that makes the use of forms necessary in religious worship. And when the priests of Israel set themselves to organize the worship of Israel according to prophetic ideals it was this that they realized. A purely moral and spiritual worship of God was impossible; external forms were necessary if worship were to be carried on. But a ritual of worship, the forms of which became the embodiment of prophetic ideals, was not an impossibility. The task of the priests of the later period was not to

develop a formless worship, they did not feel called upon to do so, but their task was to make the forms of worship reflect the prophetic conception of God, and, therefore, acceptable to Him.

Worship has a positive value for the truly religious spirit. The ideal set before men is that they be holy even as God is holy. But can man attain to such ethical and spiritual excellence apart from a contemplation of the holy God? If reverence for God and all sacred things is not cultivated the ideal will be impossible of attainment. If man is not to grow weary in well-doing he must constantly renew his spiritual powers; if he is not to lose his hold on God he must constantly renew his faith in Him. Spiritual powers are renewed and faith in God is increased through fellowship with God. Through the worship of to-day men are the better fitted for the work of to-morrow.

The truly religious life manifests itself in high ethical character and conduct, but it is maintained through fellowship with God. It is right relations with God as well as with men. And to interpret the prophetic dictum, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," to imply that all the forms of worship are not only unimportant but unnecessary, is to reduce religion to the level of mere ethical culture. What is to be the motive power of the good life if we do not relate it to God? There must be some ultimate sanction for our ideals. To be good and to do good man must cultivate a sense of the eternal goodness. The worship of God is the only appropriate preparation for true spiritual and ethical living. And it was because the people of their day did not so regard it, but rather made it a substitute for the good life, that the pre-exilic prophets denounced it.

Worship is the expression of a feeling of reverence for God, and the "reverence of God is the beginning of wisdom." There can be no more serious defect of character than a lack of respect for sacred things. To be a scoffer, one who holds nothing good in reverence, is regarded in the Old Testament as the climax

of an evil course of life(cf.Ps.1). How much real regard will one have for truth, virtue, or beauty, who has no regard for God? Complaint is often made about the secularization of life in our day. May not the de-emphasis of public worship and the disparagement of religious forms be justly regarded as a contributing cause of such secularization of life? An undue emphasis upon forms and symbols tends to give rise to a cold formalism; but an undue disparagement of religious forms tends to a secular informalism.

Worship is the conscious approach of the soul to God, the Eternal Goodness, in whom all beauty, truth, and virtue have their sanction, and who is, therefore, the supreme object of man's reverence, adoration, and devotion. "Religion" says one writer, "is too rich and complex to be reduced to any one act or attitude or aspect of life. ----- But there is one act of life which does bring us in a special and peculiar way into the holy of holies of religion- a central act without which any person's religion will always remain dwarfed and unfulfilled. By worship I mean the act of rising to a personal, experimental consciousness of the real presence of God which floods the soul with joy and bathes the whole inward spirit with refreshing streams of life. Never to have felt that, never to have opened the life to these incoming divine tides never to have experienced the joy of personal fellowship with God, is surely to have missed the richest privilege and the highest beatitude of religion."²⁰ Does it matter, it is sometimes asked, whether a man worships God so long as he behaves? The prophet Micah declared that it was required of man not only that he do justly and love mercy, but also that he walk humbly with his God. Fellowship with God is a necessary element of the religious life, and it is through worship that man enters into fellowship with God.

Now, since worship is the conscious approach of the soul to God, how is the soul to make its approach? Is there such a thing, can there be such a thing as a formless worship?. The prophetic ideal for Israel was a life of fellowship

²⁰ Jones: The World Within, p.18f.

with God. But I do not for a moment believe that they conceived of such a relationship being sustained and expressed without the aid of any external forms whatever. Jeremiah, in his description of the new Israel, speaks of the people coming from all parts of the land to offer sacrifices to Jahweh in the temple.

e The cultus which he had so severely condemned was that of a people who, by their evil doings, had put themselves out of relation with their God, and whose worship was invalid because they had substituted the forms of religion for the substance thereof. But in the restoration the ritual of worship ~~of wor-~~
~~ship~~ will be the expression of truly pious hearts, and as such it will be acceptable to Jahweh (cf. Jer. 26:17; 31:14; 33:6-8, 11; 32:39, 40;). And Ezekiel devised his ritual program for the purpose of maintaining the renewed fellowship between the holy God and the regenerated people. With all the danger that besets the use of forms in religion, and the chief peril is that to which Israel's worship succumbed, namely, of substituting the outward form for the inner spirit, the symbol for the reality, there is, nevertheless, a place and a need for forms in religion; and there is abundant evidence in the Old Testament that the prophetic party recognized this. It is only by an arbitrary interpretation of the prophetic utterances respecting the cultus that the prophets are made to appear as the exponents of a formless worship of God. The ritual codes and the Psalter not only reveal the influence of prophetic idealism on the cultus, but they interpret the prophetic spirit in this respect more truly than some of the modern critics do. Escape from forms in anything that relates to human life does not seem to be possible. Man has his forms in the social and political and every other sphere of life. Is the religious the only sphere of life in which he is to be forbidden the use of forms through which to give expression to his inner and most fundamental feelings. Forms are worthless when they are mere pretense; they may be used to conceal the true feelings of the heart. But they are none the less necessary to a true express-

ion of the feelings and needs of the soul. The imagination has its place in religion in the apprehension of spiritual values; the mystical element must not be undervalued in a desire to emphasize the practical. "We spend our polemic upon the Mass," says Dr. Forsythe, "and fitly enough in proper place. But the Roman Catholic form of worship will always have a vast advantage over ours so long as people come from its central act with the sense of something done in the spiritual world, while they leave ours only with the sense of something said to the present world."²¹

The error of those who decry the priestly ritual as a lapse into formalism lies in failing to distinguish between formalism in religion, and the use of forms as aids in the worship of God and the culture of the soul. For while there is always the danger of ritualism degenerating into mere formalism, and the more elaborate the ritual the greater the danger, yet not all ritualists are guilty of formalism. The prophets proclaimed lofty conceptions of God and His relation to Israel. And the priests found in the forms of the ritual a medium for presenting the prophetic conception of God to the minds of the people, and of expressing the worshipper's feeling of wonder, awe, and reverence in the divine presence.

We have learned from our study of the prophets and the cultus that what matters most in religion is not the form or the rite, but the motives that underly them. Forms may serve to express the soul's consciousness of its need of God, its reverence for Him, and its devotion to Him, and with the expression of it this consciousness takes on new strength. The ultimate test of a man's religion lies not so much in his outward performances as in his inner attitudes. It is God-like character which gives value to ceremonial performances. Hence the fallacy of substituting external rites for practical goodness. It was this which the prophets denounced, and which every true prophet of God will denounce wherever he finds it. This fundamental truth of prophetic teach-

²¹Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p.81.

ing is fully reflected in the ritual codes and the Psalter. It need not be supposed that the prophets regarded religious rites and forms as only evil in their influence and outworking, and for that reason advocated their complete elimination. Nor need it be supposed that the priests regarded the system of external rites and forms as constituting religion. In my judgment there is no sufficient grounds for either view. External observances may be reduced to the minimum both in number and simplicity, but they cannot be dispensed with in either the public or private worship of God. One of Jesus' last acts before His death was to give His disciples an outward form to be observed in His church to show forth His death till He come. And in His "Great Commission" He commanded His disciples to baptize all believers, thus giving to the church another outward rite. Forms are inevitable, both in life and in religion, but when used sincerely and discriminatingly to give expression to the soul's consciousness of personal relationship to God there is a legitimate place for them in religion.

In the foregoing discussion I have tried to establish two points: (1) that the prophets or the prophetic party did not reject the cultus per se as a thing essentially evil and alien to the religion of Israel; and (2), that all their efforts and influence were directed towards purging the cultus of every heathen element, refining and moralizing it, and thus making it more adequately express the nature of Israel's God and the relation between Him and His people. The first-named conclusion I have reached through an examination of the utterances of the prophets respecting the cultus, and the second through an examination of the ritual codes and the liturgies of worship used in the second temple. I am thoroughly convinced that but for the work and influence of the prophets the cultus of Israel would have become but another of the many pagan cults. The high development of the religious offices and institutions of Israel is sometimes explained on the ground of her sense of religious destiny. But,

it may be asked, who created and fostered her idea of a religious destiny, if not the prophets? Had not the Baalizing process been checked, and had Jahweh become as one of the Canaanite Baals what destiny could there have been for Israel? But this process was checked through the activity of the prophetic party, and Jahweh was set apart from the Baals of the land. Early Israel, as we have seen, possessed many of the religious rites and institutions that were common to primitive Semitic religion. These had been taken over and adapted to the worship of Jahweh. But their similarity to the rites and institutions of their heathen neighbours made them more open to heathen corruption. We find therefore, that the prophetic party strove more and more to dissociate the religious institutions of Israel from their original occasion, and it was to this end that the prophetic writers, J and E, made a re-interpretation of them. This tendency found a fuller and a more complete expression in the D code. And because of the experiences of the exile the separation of Jahweh worship and heathen ritual, the goal of the prophetic party, was completely effected. But without the work of the prophets this would not have been accomplished.

But this is the negative side of the prophets' influence on the cultus. To have succeeded in differentiating Jahweh from the Baals was a great achievement. But why should He be set apart from all other gods? Was ^{it} merely because He was the God of Israel? No! It was not so much that He was the God of Israel as that He was a different kind of God from all other gods. The conflict was between an ethical and a naturalistic conception of God. The prophets proclaimed the doctrine of an ethical God who was more interested in righteousness and social justice than in ritual, and these, therefore, constituted Jahweh's first demand upon Israel. The prophets found their sanction for this doctrine of God in the Mosaic covenant. Jahweh was the God of Israel and Israel the people of Jahweh, not by natural kinship, but by a covenant entered into voluntarily and entailing mutual obligations. Growing out of their lofty con-

ception of God and His relation to Israel were high ideals of life which the prophets urged upon the nation. The incompatibility of the popular worship with the lofty conceptions which the prophets proclaimed could not but be evident to all thoughtful minds among the people. The high ideals which the prophets urged were bound in time to exercise a refining and spiritualizing influence on the cultus. That they did so is clearly seen in an examination of the later ritual codes and of the character of the post-exilic religion of the Hebrews. For, as already pointed out, the religious outlook and practice of the returned exiles was that of the prophets, and prophetic teaching had in the end triumphed over the popular religion against which it had contended down through the centuries.

O WORSHIP THE LORD IN THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS:

FEAR BEFORE HIM ALL THE EARTH.